THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA.

THE

ADVENTURES

OF

HAJJI BABA,

OF

ISPAHAN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE ADVENTURES OF HAJJI BABA.

CHAPTER I.

Of the preparations made by the chief physician to receive the Shah as his guest, and of the great expense which threatened him.

In my walk I had almost determined to quit the doctor's house immediately, and abandon Tehran, such was the desperate view I took of my situation; but my love for Zeenab overcame this resolution; and in the hope of seeing her again, I continued to drag on a miserable existence as a dependent on Mirza Ahmak. He had no suspicion that I was his rival, and that I

had been the cause of the late confusion in his harem; but he was aware that some one must have had access to it, and therefore took such precautions for the future, that I found great difficulty in discovering how it fared with my love, or what had been the consequences of the anger of the khanum. I daily watched the door of the anderûn, in the hope of seeing Zeenab in the suite of her mistress when she went out, but in vain: there was no indication of her, and my imagination made me apprehend either that she was kept in close confinement, or that she had fallen a victim to the violence of her enemies in the harem. My impatience had risen to the utmost, when I, one day, perceived that Nûr Jehan, the black slave, had issued from the house by herself, and was making her way to the bazar. I followed her, and trusting to the friendship that she formerly entertained for the mistress of my heart, I ventured to accost her.

'Peace be with you, Nûr Jehan!' said I; 'where are you going in such haste by

yourself?'—'May your kindness never be less, *Aga Hajjî,' answered she; 'I am bound to the druggist's for our Cûrdish slave.'

'What! Zeenab?' exclaimed I, in great agitation. 'What has befallen her? Is she sick?'

'Ah, poor thing,' replied the good negro girl, 'she has been sick and sorry too. You Persians are a wicked nation. We who are black, and slaves, have twice the heart that you have. You may talk of your hospitality, and of your kindness to strangers; but was there ever an animal, not to say a human creature, treated in the way that this poor stranger has been?'

'What have they done to her? For God's sake, tell me, Nûr Jehan!' said I; 'by my soul, tell me!'

Softened by my manner, and by the interest which I took in what she said, she informed me, that in consequence of the

* *Aga* is used in the sense of *master*.

jealousy of her mistress, Zeenab had been confined to a small back room, whence she was prohibited stirring; that the treatment which she had received had occasioned a violent fever, which had brought her to the brink of the grave, but that her youth and strength had enabled her to overcome it: and now that she was quite recovered, her mistress began to relent, and had permitted her to use the *khena* and the *surmeh**, which she was about to procure from the druggist. But she was sure that this indulgence would never have been granted, if the report had not been spread, that it was the Shah's intention to pay Mirza Ahmak a visit; and as it is his privilege to enter every man's harem at pleasure, and to inspect his women unveiled; her mistress, who wanted to make as great a display of slaves and attendants as possible, had released Zeenab from the confinement of her room, in order that she should wait

* The *surmeh* is a collyrium.

upon her: but she was still restricted to the walls of the secret chamber.

I was relieved by this intelligence, and began to turn in my mind how I could manage to obtain an interview; but such insurmountable obstacles did I foresee, that, fearful of entailing fresh miseries upon her, I determined to remain quiet for the present, and to follow the poet's advice,—'to fold up the carpet of my desires, and not to prowl round and round my inclination.'

In the meanwhile, the day of the Shah's departure for his usual summer campaign approached; and, according to custom, he passed the intermediate time in visiting the noblemen of his court, and thereby reaping for himself and his suite a harvest of presents, which every one who is distinguished by so great an honour is obliged to make.

Nûr Jehan's intelligence to me was true: the king had selected Mirza Ahmak as one of those to whom he intended the honour of of a visit; for the doctor had the reputation

of being rich, and he had long been marked as prey fit for the royal grasp. Accordingly, he was informed of the day when this new and special proof of favour would be conferred upon him; and as a most distinguishing mark of it, he was told, that it should not be an ordinary visit, but that the doctor should enjoy the satisfaction of entertaining his majesty: in short, the king would take his *shâm*, or dinner, at his house.

The doctor, half elated with the greatness of the distinction, half trembling at the ruin that awaited his finances, set to work to make all the necessary preparations. The first thing to be settled was the value and nature of the *Pah-endaz**. This he knew would be talked of throughout the country; and this was to be the standard of the favour in which he stood with his sovereign. His vanity was roused on the one hand,

* The ceremony of the *pah-endaz* consists in spreading rich stuffs for the king to walk upon.

and his avarice alarmed on the other. If he exhibited too much wealth, he would remain a mark for future exactions; and if he made no display, his rivals in consequence would treat him with contempt. He had not deigned to consult me for a long time, and I had dwindled into a mere hanger-on; but recollecting the success which had attended my negotiation with the European doctor, he called me again into his councils.

'Hajjî,' said he, 'what is to be done in this difficult case? I have received a hint, that the king expects from me a considerable pah-endaz, and this from the lord high treasurer himself, whose magnificence on such occasions is the theme of wonder throughout the whole of Persia. Now, it is impossible that I can rival him. He insisted, that I ought to spread broad cloth from the entrance of the street to where the king alights from his horse; that there he should tread upon cloth of gold, until he reached the entrance of the garden; and from thence, the whole length of the

court to his seat, a carpet of Cashmerian shawls was to be extended, each shawl increasing in value, until the one upon the *musnud*, or carpet of state, which should be of an extraordinary price. Now, you know I am not the man to make such display: I am a *hakím*, one of the learned: I make no profession of riches. Besides, 'tis plain that the lord high treasurer only says this, because he has cloth, brocades, and shawls to dispose of, which he wishes me to take off his hands. No, it is impossible that I can listen to his extravagant proposals. What then is to be done?'

I answered, 'Tis true that you are a hakîm; but then you are the royal physician; you hold a situation of great consequence: besides, for the sake of the lady, your wife, you are bound to do something worthy of such an alliance. The king will be displeased if you do not receive him in a manner that will show your sense of the confidence he reposes in you.'

'Yes,' said the Mirza, 'and that may all

be very true, friend Hajjî; still I am but a doctor, and cannot be supposed to have all these shawls, brocades, and stuffs by me whenever I want them.'

'But what can you do otherwise?' replied I; 'you would not strew the road with jalap, and spread his majesty's seat with a blister plaster?'

'No,' said he; 'but we might strew flowers, which, you know, are cheap; and perhaps we might sacrifice an ox, and break plenty of bottles full of sweetmeats under his horse's feet.—Would not that answer?'

'It is impossible,' exclaimed I; 'if you act thus, the Shah, and your enemies, will devise means to strip you as naked as my hand. Perhaps there is no necessity to do all the lord high treasurer advises; but you might spread chintz in the street, velvet at the alighting spot, brocade in the court-yard, and shawls in the room; that will not be very expensive.'

'You do not say ill,' said the doctor:

'I might perhaps manage that. We have chintz in the house, which was intended for the women's trowsers; that will probably do. A patient gave me a piece of Ispahan velvet the other day; I can sell my last dress of honour for some brocade; and two or three of my wife's shawls will suffice for the room.—By the blessing of Ali, that is settled.'

'Ah, but the harem!' exclaimed I; 'the Shah must go there. You know it brings good luck to be looked at by the king, and your women must appear well dressed on the occasion.'

'Oh, as for that,' said the doctor, 'they can borrow; they can borrow any thing they like from their friends—jewels, trowsers, jackets, shawls,—they can get whatever they want.'

Not so, said my lady the khanum. As soon as this arrangement was mentioned to her, she protested against it; she called her husband a low born, niggardly carle; one unfit for the honour of possessing her for a

wife; and insisted upon his conducting himself on this occasion in a manner worthy of the high distinction that was about to be conferred upon him. It was in vain to contend against her; and therefore the preparations were made upon a scale far exceeding what the doctor had intended; and every individual of his house appeared to be actuated by only one feeling, that of making him refund all that money which he so long and so unpitifully had extorted from others.

CHAPTER II.

Concerning the manner of the Shah's reception: of the present made him, and the conversation which ensued.

On the morning of the day upon which this great event was to happen, (a day which had been duly settled as auspicious by the astrologers) the note of preparation was heard throughout the whole of Mirza Ahmak's dwelling. The king's tent-pitchers had taken possession of the saloon of audience in which he was to hold his court, where they spread fresh carpets and prepared the royal musnud, covering it with a magnificent shawl. They threw water over the court yard, set the fountains playing, and fitted on a new curtain to the front of the building. The king's gardeners also came and decked the premises with flowers. On the surface of the pool of water, immediately

facing the spot where his majesty was to be seated, they spread rose leaves in curious devices. Around the marble basin they placed rows of oranges, and a general appearance of freshness and cheerfulness was given to the whole scene.

Then the cooks, a numerous and most despotic band, arrived with such accompaniments of pots, pans, braziers, and boilers, that the doctor, out of all patience, inquired of the head of the kitchen, 'what this meant; whether it was intended that he should feed all the city, as well as the king.' 'Not quite all,' was his answer; 'but perhaps you will recollect the words of Saadi:

'If from the peasant's tree, the king an apple craves,
Down with it root and branch, exclaim his ready slaves;
And should he, in dainty mood, one single egg require,
Lo! thousand spitted birds revolve before the fire.''

They took possession of the kitchen, which did not contain one quarter of the space required for their operations, and consequently it was necessary to erect temporary fire-places in the adjoining court, where the braziers were placed, and in which was boiled the rice that is distributed on such occasions to all present. Besides the cooks, a body of confectioners established themselves in one of the apartments, where the sweetmeats, the sherbets, the ices, and the fruits were prepared; and they called for so many ingredients, that the doctor had nearly expired when the list was presented to him. In addition to all these, arrived the king's band of singers and musicians, and the *Lûti Bashi* (jester in chief), accompanied by twenty Lûtis, each with a drum hanging over his shoulder.

The time appointed for the visit was after the evening's prayer, which is made at sunset. At that hour, when the heat of the day had partly subsided, and the inhabitants of Tehran were about to enjoy the cool of the

evening, the Shah left his palace, and proceeded to the doctor's house. The streets had been swept and watered; and as the royal cortege approached, flowers were strewn on the path. Mirza Ahmak himself had proceeded to the royal presence to announce that all was ready, and walked close to the king's stirrup during the cavalcade.

The procession was opened by the heralds, who, with the distinguishing club of office in their hands, and ornament on the head, proclaimed the king's approach, and marshalled every one on the road. The tops of the walls were occupied by women in their white veils, and in the better houses they were seen to be peeping through the holes made in the screens which surround their terraces. Then followed a great body of tent-pitchers and carpet-spreaders, with long slender sticks in their hands, keeping the road clear from intruders. After this, walked a crowd of well dressed officers of the stable, bearing rich embroidered saddle housings

over their shoulders; then servants in the gayest attire, with gold pipes in their hands, the king's shoe bearer, the king's ewer and basin bearer, the carrier of his cloak, the comptroller of the opium box, and a number of other domestics. As this was only a private procession, his majesty was preceded by no led horses, which usually form so splendid a part of his grand displays. To these succeeded a train of running footmen, two and two, fantastically dressed, some with gold coins embroidered on their black velvet coats, others dressed in brocades, and others in silks: they immediately preceded the Shah in person, who was attended by the chief of the running footmen, a man of considerable consequence, known by the enamelled handled whip stuck in his girdle. The king rode a quiet ambling horse, richly caparisoned; but his own dress was plain, and only distinguished by the beauty of the shawls and other materials of which it was composed. After him, at an interval of fifty paces, followed three of the king's

sons, then the noble of nobles, the great master of the ceremonies, the master of the horse, the court poet, and many others, all attended by their servants: and at length when the whole party were collected together, who were to partake of Mirza Ahmak's substance, five hundred would probably be called a moderate number.

The king alighted at the gate, the entrance being too narrow to ride through; and proceeded up the centre walk of the court to the seat prepared for him in the great saloon. Every one, except the princes, stood without, and the doctor himself did the duties of a menial.

After his majesty had been seated some little time, the master of ceremonies, accompanied by the master of the house, walking barefooted, appeared near the reservoir, the latter holding up breast-high a silver salver, in which were spread one hundred tomauns of new coinage. The master of ceremonies then exclaimed, in a loud voice, 'The meanest of your majesty's

slaves makes a humble representation to the Centre of the Universe, the King of Kings, the Shadow of God upon earth, that Mirza Ahmak, the king's chief physician, dares to approach the sacred dust of your majesty's feet, and to bring by way of an offering one hundred gold tomauns.'

To which the king answered, 'You are welcome, Mirza Ahmak. Praise be to God, you are a good servant. The Shah has a particular share of condescension for you; your face is whitened, your consequence has increased. Go, give praises to God, that the king has come to your house, and has accepted your present.'

Upon which the doctor knelt down and kissed the ground.

Then his majesty, turning to his noble of nobles, exclaimed, 'By the head of the Shah, Mirza Ahmak is a good man. There is no one like him now in Persia—he is wiser by far than Locman—more learned than Galen.'

'Yes, yes,' answered the noble of nobles:

'Locman indeed! whose dog was he, or Galen? This also comes from the happy star of the King of Kings. Such a king Persia before never saw, and such a doctor for such a king! Men may praise the doctors of Europe and of India, but where is science to be found, if it be not in Persia? —Who shall dare to claim a superiority, as long as the land of Persia is enlightened by the presence of its Shah without compare?'

'That's all true,' said the king. 'Persia is the country which, from the beginning of the world to the present day, has always been famous for the genius of its inhabitants, and the wisdom and splendour of its monarchs. From Kaiumars, the first king of the world, to me who am the present Shah, what list is so perfect, so glorious? India also had her sovereigns, Arabia her caliphs, Turkey her *Khon Khors* (lit. blood drinkers), Tartary her khans, and China her emperors; but as for the Franks, who come into my dominions from God knows where, to buy and sell, and to bring me

tribute of presents;—they, poor infidels! have a parcel of kings, of whose countries even the names have not reached our ears.'

'*Belli, belli*, Yes, yes!' said the nobleman, 'I am your sacrifice. Except the English and the French nations, which by all accounts are something in the world, all the others are but little better than nothing. As for the Moscovites, they are not Europeans—they are less than the dogs of Europe.'

'Ha! Ha! Ha! you say true,' answered the king, laughing. 'They had their *Khûrshîd Colah**, their 'Head of Glory,' as they called her, who for a woman was a wonderful person, 'tis true—and we all know that when a woman meddles with any thing, *pena be khoda*, it is then time to put one's trust in God; but after her, they had a Paul, who was a pure madman; who, to give you an instance of what his folly was, wanted to march an army to India; just as

* Catherine II. is so styled by the Persians.

if the *Kizzil Bashes** would ever have allowed it. A Russian puts on a hat, a tight coat, and tight breeches, shaves his beard, and then calls himself a European. You might just as well tie the wings of a goose to your back and call yourself an angel.'

'Wonderful, wonderful,' exclaimed the head of the nobles; 'the *Shah-in-Shah* speaks like an angel. Show us a king in Europe that would speak like him.'

'Yes, yes,' was chorused by all the bystanders. 'May he live a thousand years,' said one. 'May his shadow never be less,' said another.

'But it is of their women,' continued the king, 'of whom we hear the most extraordinary accounts. In the first place, they have no *anderûn*† in their houses; men and women all live together—then the women never wear veils—they show their faces to whoever chooses to look at them, like those

* *Kizzil Bash*, or Red Head, is a sort of nickname given from old times to the Persians.

† The *inner*, or women's apartment.

of our wandering tribes. Tell me, Mirza Ahmak, you that are a doctor and a philosopher, by what extraordinary arrangement of Providence does it happen, that we Mussulmâns should be the only people on earth who can depend upon our wives, and who can keep them in subjection. You,' said his majesty smiling, ironically, 'you I hear are blessed above all men in an obedient and dutiful wife.'

'Possessed of the kindness and protection of the King of Kings,' answered the doctor, 'I am blessed with every thing that can make life happy. I, my wife, my family, are your humble slaves, and every thing we have your property. If your slave possesses any merit, it is none of his; it all emanates from the asylum of the world: even my failings become virtues, when the king commands me. 'But what lamp can shine in the face of the sun, or what minaret can be called high at the foot of the mountain of Alwend?' With respect to what your majesty has been pleased to say concerning

women, it appears to the meanest of your slaves, that there must be a great affinity between beasts and Europeans, and which accounts for the inferiority of the latter to Mussulmans. Male and female beasts herd promiscuously together; so do the Europeans. The female beasts do not hide their faces; neither do the Europeans. They wash not, nor do they pray five times a day; neither do the Europeans. They live in friendship with swine; so do the Europeans; for instead of exterminating the unclean beast, as we do, I hear that every house in Europe has an apartment fitted up for its hog. Then as for their women indeed!—What dog seeing its female in the streets does not go and make himself agreeable?—so doubtless does the European. Wife in those unclean countries must be a word without a meaning, since every man's wife is every man's property.'

'Well said, doctor,' exclaimed the king; ''tis plain, then, that all are beasts but us. Our holy Prophet (upon whom be blessing

and peace!) has told us as much. The infidel will never cease roasting, whilst the true believer will be eternally seated next to his houri in the seventh heaven! But we hear, doctor, that your Paradise has began here on earth, and that you have got your houris already:—hah! how is that?'

Upon which Mirza Ahmak made a low prostration, and said, 'Whatever the monarch permits his slave to possess is the monarch's. The hour will be fortunate, and Mirza Ahmak's head will reach the skies, when the propitious step of the King of Kings shall pass the threshold of his unworthy *anderûn*.'

'We shall see with our own eyes,' rejoined the king; a look from the king brings good luck. Go, give notice to your harem that the Shah will visit it; and if there be any one sick—any one whose desires are unaccomplished—any maiden who sighs for her lover, or any wife who wishes to get rid of her husband,—let them come forward, let

them look at the king, and good fortune will attend them.'

Upon this the poet, who had hitherto remained silent, his mind apparently absorbed in thought, exclaimed, 'Whatever the king hath ordained is only an additional proof of his beneficence and condescension;' and then in very good verse he sung—

'The firmament possesses but one sun, and the land of Irâk but one king.

'Life, light, joy, and prosperity attend them both wherever they appear.

'The doctor may boast of his medicine; but what medicine is equal to a glance from the king's eye?

'What is spikenard? what *mumiai** ? what *pahzer* ? compared even to the twinkle of a royal eyelash!

'Oh! Mirza Ahmak, happiest of men, and most blessed of doctors!

* *Mumiai* and *Pahzer* are antidotes in which the Persians have great faith. Our Bezoar is evidently a corruption of *Pahzer*.

'Now, indeed, you possess within your walls an antidote to every disorder, a specific against every evil.

'Shut up your Galen, burn your Hippocrates, and put Avicenna in a corner: the father of them all is here in person.

'Who will take cassia when an eye is to be had, or will writhe under a blister when a look will relieve him?

'Oh! Mirza Ahmak, happiest of men, and most blessed of doctors!'

Every one present had kept the strictest silence when this was repeating, when the king exclaimed, '*Aferîn*, this is well; you are indeed a poet, and worthy of our reign. Who was Ferdousi when compared to you? As for Mahmoud, the Ghaznevi, *hâk bûd* (he was dirt). Go to him,' said he to the noble of nobles, 'go, kiss him on the mouth, and, when that is done, fill it with sugar-candy. Every pleasure should attend such a mouth, from whence such good things proceed.'

Upon which the noble of nobles, who was

endowed with a large and bushy beard, approached the poet, and inflicted a kiss upon his mouth, which also was protected by an appropriate quantity of hair; and then from a plate of sugar-candy, which was handed to him, he took as many lumps as would quite fill his jaws, and inserted them therein with his fingers with all due form.

Though evidently distressed with his felicity, the poet did his utmost to appear at the summit of all happiness, and grinned with such rare contortions, that involuntary tears flowed from his eyes as fast as the sugar-candy distilled through his lips.

The king then dismissed his courtiers and attendants, and preparations were made for serving up the royal dinner.

CHAPTER III.

A description of the entertainment, which is followed by an event destructive to Hajji Baba's happiness.

The only persons, besides servants, admitted into the saloon where the Shah dined, were the three princes, his sons, who had accompanied him; and they stood at the farthest end, with their backs against the wall, attired in dresses of ceremony, with swords by their sides. Mirza Ahmak remained in attendance without. A cloth, of the finest Cashmerian shawl fringed with gold, was then spread on the carpet before the king, by the chief of the valets, and a gold ewer and basin were presented for washing hands. The dinner was then brought in trays, which, as a precaution against poison, had been sealed with the signet of the head steward before they left the kitchen, and were broken open by him

again in the presence of the Shah. Here were displayed all the refinements of cookery: rice, in various shapes, smoked upon the board; first, the *chilau*, as white as snow; then the *pilau*, with a piece of boiled lamb, smothered in the rice; then another *pilau*, with a baked fowl in it; a fourth, coloured with saffron, mixed up with dried peas; and at length, the king of Persian dishes, the *narinj pilau*, made with slips of orange-peel, spices of all sorts, almonds, and sugar: salmon and herring, from the Caspian Sea, were seen among the dishes; and trout from the river Zengî, near Erivan; then in china basins and bowls of different sizes were the ragouts, which consisted of hash made of a fowl boiled to rags, stewed up with rice, sweet herbs, and onions; a stew, in which was a lamb's marrow-bone, with some loose flesh about it, and boiled in its own juice; small gourds, crammed with force-meat, and done in butter; a fowl stewed to rags, with a brown sauce of prunes; a large omelette,

about two inches thick; a cup full of the essence of meat, mixed up with rags of lamb, almonds, prunes and tamarinds, which was poured upon the top of the chilau; a plate of poached eggs, fried in sugar and butter; a dish of *badenjâns*, slit in the middle and boiled in grease; a stew of venison; and a great variety of other messes too numerous to mention. After these came the roasts. A lamb was served up hot from the spit, the tail of which, like marrow, was curled up over its back. Partridges, and what is looked upon as the rarest delicacy in Persia, two *capk dereh*, partridges of the valley, were procured on the occasion. Pheasants from Mazanderan were there also, as well as some of the choicest bits of the wild ass and antelope. The display and the abundance of delicacies surprised every one; and they were piled up in such profusion around the king, that he seemed almost to form a part of the heap. I do not mention the innumerable little accessories of preserves,

pickles, cheese, butter, onions, celery, salt, pepper, sweets, and sours, which were to be found in different parts of the tray, for that would be tedious: but the sherbets were worthy of notice, from their peculiar delicacy: these were contained in immense bowls of the most costly china, and drank by the help of spoons of the most exquisite workmanship, made of the pear-tree. They consisted of the common lemonade, made with superior art; of the *sekenjebîn*, or vinegar, sugar, and water, so mixed that the sour and the sweet were as equally balanced, as the blessings and miseries of life; the sherbet of sugar and water, with rose-water to give it a perfume, and sweet seeds to increase its flavour; and that made of the pomegranate; all highly cooled by lumps of floating ice.

The king then, doubling himself down with his head reclining towards his food, buried his hand in the pilaus and other dishes before him, and eat in silence, whilst

the princes and the servants in waiting, in attitudes of respect, remained immoveable. When he had finished he got up, and walked into an adjoining room, where he washed his hands, drank his coffee, and smoked his water-pipe.

In the course of his eating he ordered one of the pilaus, of which he had partaken, to be carried to Mirza Ahmak, his host, by a servant in waiting. As this is considered a mark of peculiar honour, the mirza was obliged to give a present in money to the bearer. A similar distinction was conferred upon the poet for his impromptu, and he also made a suitable present. His majesty also sent one of the messes, of which he had freely partaken, to the doctor's wife, who liberally rewarded the bearer. And in this manner he contrived to reward two persons, the one who received the present, and the other who bore it.

The princes then sat down, and when

they had eat their fill they rose, and the dishes were served up in another room, where the noble of nobles, the court poet, the master of the horse, and all the officers of state and courtiers who had attended his majesty, were seated, and who continued the feast which the king and his sons had began. After this, the dinner was taken in succession to the different servants, until the dishes were cleared by the tent-pitchers and scullions.

In the mean while the Shah had been introduced into the harem by the doctor in person; and as immediate death would have been inflicted upon any one who might have been caught peeping, I waited in the greatest suspense until I could learn what might have taken place there; but what was my horror! what my consternation! on hearing (as soon as the king had returned to the great saloon,) that the doctor had made a present of his Cûrdish slave to his majesty! At this intelligence I grew sick

with apprehension; and, although there was every reason to rejoice at her leaving her present situation, yet there were consequences which I anticipated,—consequences which might even ultimately affect her life, at the very thought of which my blood ran cold. We had been too much enamoured to listen to the dictates of prudence, and now the future opened a prospect to me, the back-ground of which was darkened by images the most horrible that the imagination can conceive.

'I will endeavour,' thought I, 'to gain some certain intelligence of what has happened; perhaps in the confusion, I may chance to get a sight of Zeenab herself.' I lost no time, therefore, in resorting to our old place of meeting on the terrace. Much noise and clatter were heard below amongst the women, a large number having come as visitors, in addition to those which composed the doctor's harem; but I could perceive no one amongst them that looked

at all like her I sought; indeed, the night had closed in, and I despaired of making any sign which might be recognized; but, trusting to the sympathies of love, I thought it certain that she would hit upon precisely the same plan which I had devised to see her. Part of the terrace where our first interview had taken place was situated near the street, and upon this the women of the harem were accustomed to take their station whenever any thing remarkable was to be seen abroad. Here I hoped Zeenab would not fail to come at the moment of the Shah's departure, which was now close at hand. The clatter of the horses, the shouts of men, the passing to and fro of lanterns, all announced the close of the scene; and to my delight I heard a corresponding shuffling of women's slippers and voices making for the steps of the terrace. I had placed myself behind the wall, so as to be seen by those only who had a knowledge of the premises, and

I flattered myself that Zeenab, by a natural impulse, would turn her eyes towards me. I was not mistaken. She was among the women who had ascended the terrace, and she recognized me. That was all I wanted, and I left it to her ingenuity to devise a mode of conversing with me.

The cry of *Gitchin!* Begone! made by the heralds whenever the king rises to depart, was now heard, and every one arranged himself in the procession. With the exception of the numerous lanterns, which by their size announced the dignity of the different personages whose steps they lighted, the ceremony of the king's return to his palace was the same as on his leaving it, and with his majesty departed all that had a moment before given life and animation to the place.

The women, satisfied that nothing more was to be seen, also left the terrace. Their conversation, during the time of their stay, had consisted almost entirely of dis-

putes of who had been most seen and admired by the Shah; and, as they were descending, I overheard great expressions of envy and jealousy at the good fortune which, in their eyes, had fallen to the share of Zeenab.

'I can't conceive,' said one, 'what the Shah could have seen so attractive in her. After all, she has no beauty. Did you ever see so large a mouth? She has no salt in her complexion.'

'She is crooked,' said another.

'As for her waist,' said a third, ''tis like that of an elephant; and then her feet,—a camel has smaller.'

'And then,' said a fourth, 'she is a Yezeedi. She must have got a charm from the *shaitan* himself, to make herself remarked.' 'That is the truth,' they all exclaimed: 'Yes, that's it—she and the devil are in partnership to make the king eat dirt.' Upon this they all seemed satisfied, and I heard no more of them.

But one woman still remained behind on the terrace, apparently engrossed with what was passing on in the street; she immediately rose when the others had left it, and came towards me. It was Zeenab.

CHAPTER IV.

Hajji Baba meets with a rival in the Shah himself, and loses the fair object of his affections.

The wall behind which I had taken post was not long a barrier between us, and I had scarcely made known to her the unhappy state of my mind, before she apprized me of the danger that we incurred in such an interview. She soon gave me to understand that this must be our last meeting; for, as she now belonged to the royal harem, death would be our fate if we were found together. I was anxious to hear in what manner the king had gained possession of her, and what was to be her future destiny; but sobs stifled every thing I had to say. She, on the other hand, did not appear to take our separation quite so much

to heart; for, whether dazzled by the prospect of her future destinies, or subdued by the miseries she had already endured on my account, certainly I did not meet that return to my affection which I had so warmly anticipated.

She informed me, that when the Shah entered the anderûn, he was received by a band of female singers, who went before, singing his praises, to the accompaniment of tambourines; and, as soon as he had seated himself in the open saloon, the khanum was permitted to enjoy the privilege of kissing his knee. A *pahendaz*, composed of embroidered silks, had been spread for him, which, as soon as the royal footsteps had passed over, was snapped up by the eunuchs, who shared it as their perquisite. The king's female master of the ceremonies was in attendance, and she made an offering of the khanum's present, which was laid out on a silver tray, and consisted of six *arac gîrs*, or skull caps, embroidered by that lady's own hands; six *sineh gîrs*, or

breast covers, made of padded shawl, worn in cold weather over the shirt; two pair of trowsers of Cashmerian shawl; three silk shirts, and six pair of stockings, knitted by the women of the doctor's house. His majesty having accepted this, with many encomiums on the khanum's industry and skill, the women were marshalled in two lines on each side of him; 'and I,' said Zeenab, 'in order that every mortification possible might be heaped upon me, was placed the last in the row, even below Nûr Jehan, the black slave. You ought to have seen the pains which all of us, even old Leilah, took to attract the Shah's attention: some were bashful, others stole wicked looks and glanced sideways; others, again, were bold, and kept their eyes fixed on the king's face. Having inspected each in turn, he paused, and keeping his eyes riveted upon me, turned to the doctor, and said, 'What sort of thing is this? she is no indifferent commodity. By the king's *Jika**, the animal

* The *jika* is an upright ornament worn in front of the crown, and is an insignia of royalty.

is fine! Doctor, mashallah! you have a good taste,—the moon face, the stag eye, the cypress waist, every thing is here.'

'Upon which the doctor, making the lowest obeisance, said, 'May I be your sacrifice, notwithstanding the slave is totally unworthy of notice; yet, since I and every thing that belongs to me is the property of the King of Kings, may I venture to place her as an offering at the foot of your majesty's throne?'

"'*Caboul!* I accept her,' said the Shah; and then calling the chief eunuch to him, he ordered that I should be educated for a *baziger* (dancer or singer), that all my clothes, &c. should be made suited to my future profession, and that I should be ready accomplished to appear before him upon his return from his summer campaign.

'Oh! I shall never forget,' exclaimed Zeenab, 'the looks of the doctor's wife when this conversation was passing; she turned towards the Shah in great humility, acquiescing in all that was said, and then

cast glances upon me, which spoke the thousand angry passions by which her breast was agitated. As for the Georgian, she looked daggers and arsenic, whilst Nûr Jehan's good-humoured face was lightened up with every expression of happiness at my good fortune. I, in the mean while, prostrated myself to the ground before the king, who still kept surveying me with a kind aspect.

'As soon as his majesty was gone, you ought to have seen the immediate change which took place in the khanum's conduct towards me. I was no longer 'a child of the devil,' 'a maiden accursed;' but it was 'my love, my soul, light of my eyes, my child.' I, who had never smoked before her, was now invited to partake of her own pipe; and whether I would or not, she thrust bits of sweetmeat into my mouth with her own fingers. As for the Georgian, she could not stand the sight, but withdrew to another place, to digest her envy as she might. I received the congratula-

tions of the other women, who did not cease repeating a long list of delights that were preparing for me. Love, wine, music, jewels, fine clothes, bathing, and standing before the king, were to be my future occupations. Some talked to me of the best spells to secure love, and to destroy the influence of rivals; others gave me the best advice how to get presents of finery; and many again began to teach me the forms of speech and compliment which I must use in case the Shah spoke to me. In short, poor Zeenab, the most miserable and neglected of human beings, all of a sudden found herself the object of universal attention and admiration.'

Zeenab here finished talking, and the joy which she seemed to feel for the change which was about to take place in her situation was so natural, that I could not find in my heart to destroy it by communicating to her my forebodings of the danger which awaited her. She little knew the horrible penalty she would incur, in case, when

called upon to attend the Shah, she should be found unworthy of his attentions; for it was upon record, under such circumstances, that death, a horrid, cruel death, had been inflicted, and that without appeal to any tribunal upon earth. I therefore seemed to partake her happiness, and although we felt we must be separated, yet we were consoled with the hope that opportunities of mutual intelligence would not be wanting.

She told me that one of the king's eunuchs was to call on the following morning, to conduct her to the seraglio, and, when bathed and newly dressed, she was to be delivered over to the department of the Bazigers, when her education was immediately to commence.

Hearing her name repeatedly called, she was afraid of risking herself longer with me, and after ten thousands and thousands protestations of mutual love, we parted, perhaps to meet no more.

CHAPTER V.

His reflections on the loss of Zeenab. He is suddenly called upon to exert his skill as a doctor.

As soon as she was gone I sat down on the same spot where we had been standing, and gave myself up to thought. 'So,' said I to myself, 'so, this is being two kernels in one almond? Well, if such be the world, then what I have been taken up with for these two last months is only a dream. I thought myself a Majnoun, and she a Leilah, and as long as the sun and moon endured we should go on loving, and getting thin, and burning like charcoal, and making *kabob** of our hearts. But 'tis clear that my beard has been laughed at.

* Roast meat.

The Shah came, looked, said two words, and all was over. Hajjî was forgotten in an instant, and Zeenab took upon herself the airs of royalty.'

I passed a feverish night, and rose early in the morning, full of new projects. In order to reflect more at my ease, I determined to take a walk without the city walls, but just as I had stepped from the house, I met Zeenab mounted on a horse, finely caparisoned, conducted by one of the royal eunuchs, and escorted by servants making way for her to pass. I expected, that at the sight of me she would have lifted up the flap of her veil; but no, she did not even move from her perpendicular on the saddle, and I walked on, more determined than ever to drive her from my recollection. But somehow or other, instead of taking my path to the gate of the city, I followed her, and was led on imperceptibly towards the king's palace.

Entering the great square, which is si-

tuated immediately before the principal gate, I found it filled with cavalry, passing muster, or the *soum*, as it is called, before the Shah in person, who was seated in the upper room over the porch. I lost Zeenab and her conductor in the crowd, who were permitted to pass, whilst I was kept back by the guards. The current of my thoughts was soon arrested by the scene carrying on before me. The troops now under examination consisted of a body of cavalry under the command of Namerd Khan, the chief executioner, who was present, dressed in cloth of gold, with the enamelled ornament on his head glittering in the sun, and mounted upon a superb charger. The review was quite new to me; and as I gazed upon the horses and the horsemen, the spears and the muskets, the days which I had passed among the Turcomans came again to my mind, and I longed once more to be engaged in active life. The troops to be reviewed were stationed on one side of the square. The

secretary at war with his six scribes were placed in the middle, taken up with their different registers: two criers were also present, the one who, with a loud voice, called out the name of the soldier, and the other answering *hazir* (present) as soon as he had passed muster. Whenever a name was called, a cavalier, completely equipped, dashed from the condensed body, and crossed the square at the full speed of his horse, making a low obeisance as he passed the Shah; and this ceremony was performed by each man until the whole were reviewed. Many and various were the appearance of the horsemen. Some came forwards in fine style, looking like Rustams, whilst others, who had perhaps borrowed a beast for the occasion, went hobbling through as if the day of battle had already taken place. I recognized many of my acquaintance as they galloped by, and was admiring the animated manner of a young man, who had urged his horse forwards, when, by some fatal accident, the beast fell

just as they were about passing the high pole which is erected in the middle of the course, and its rider was thrown with great violence against the foot of it. He was immediately taken up and carried through the crowd. Some one, recognizing me to belong to the Shah's physician, invited me to take charge of him, and, without the least apprehension from my ignorance, I did not hesitate to put on the airs of a doctor. I found the unfortunate man stretched on the ground, apparently without life. Those who surrounded him had already prescribed largely. One was pouring water down his throat, 'in the name of the blessed Hossien;' another was smoking a pipe up his nose in order to awaken him; and a third was kneading his body and limbs, to promote circulation. As soon as I appeared, these different operations were suspended, and, room being made, I felt his pulse with great solemnity, and as the surrounding uplifted faces seemed to solicit a decision, I declared, with emphasis, that he had been

struck by fate, and that life and death were now wrestling with each other who should have him. Thus (according to the practice of my master) having prepared my hearers for the worst, I ordered, as a preliminary to other remedies, that the patient should be well shaken, in order to discover if life was in him or no. No prescription was ever better administered, for the crowd almost shook him to dislocation. This had no effect. I was about prescribing again, when a cry was heard in the crowd, *Rah bedeh*, give way: *Ser hisab*, heads, heads! and the Frank doctor (of whose skill I have before given some account) made his appearance, having been sent by his ambassador, who had witnessed the catastrophe. Without having seen the patient, he cried out, 'Take blood instantly! you must not lose a moment.'

I, who now felt myself called upon to assert the dignity of the Persian faculty, and give proofs of my superior wisdom, said, 'Take blood! what doctrine is this?

Do not you know that death is cold, and that blood is hot, and that the first principle of the art is to apply warm remedies to cold diseases? Pocrat*, who is the father of all doctors, has thus ordained, and surely you cannot say that he eats his own soil. If you take blood from that body, it dies; and go tell the world that I say so.'

'As for that,' said the Frank, who had now examined it, 'we may save ourselves any further trouble: it is dead already, and hot and cold are now all one.' Upon this he took his leave, and left me and my Pocrat with our noses in the air.

'Then death,' said I, 'has had the best of it; the wisdom of man is unavailing, when opposed to the decrees of God. We doctors can no more contend with destiny, than the waters of an aqueduct can overcome those of a river.'

A Mollah, who was present, ordered his feet to be turned towards the Kebleh, his

* So Hippocrates is called in Persia.

two great toes to be tied together, a handkerchief wrapped under his chin, and fastened over his head, and then all the bystanders after him repeated aloud the profession of the true faith. By this time some of his relatives had gathered round him, and had begun the usual lamentations, when the bier was brought, and the dead body conveyed to his family.

Upon inquiry I found that the deceased had been a *Nasakchi*, i. e. one of the officers attached to the chief executioner, who has one hundred and fifty such under his command, and whose duties consist in preceding the Shah in his marches, dispersing crowds, maintaining order, taking charge of state prisoners, and, in short, acting as police officers throughout the country. It immediately struck me, how agreeable and how convenient it would be to step into the dead man's shoes, and how much better my temper and disposition were suited to filling such an office than mixing drugs and visiting the sick. In turning over in my mind

the possibility of acquiring this situation, I recollected that the chief executioner was a great friend of Mirza Ahmak, and under considerable obligations to him; for, but a few days since, he had persuaded the doctor to swear to the Shah, that wine, which is strictly prohibited at court, was absolutely necessary for his health, and that in consequence he had received a dispensation from the head of the law to drink it—a privilege, in which he indulged to the greatest excess. I therefore determined to interest the Mirza in my favour, and if possible, to turn the waters of bitterness, which the fountain of fate had been pouring into the cup of the deceased, into streams of sweet sherbet for myself.

CHAPTER VI.

Hajji is appointed to a situation under government; he becomes an executioner.

I WATCHED an opportunity before the doctor set out the next morning for the *Der-Khoneh**, to speak upon my future plans, and to request him to lose no time in asking for me the place of the deceased Nasakchi from the chief executioner. I urged the necessity of acting immediately; for as the Shah would leave the capital for his camp at Sultanieh, in the course of a few days, and as the doctor would be called upon to accompany him, it was plain, if he did not in some manner provide for me, I should be left upon his hands.

The doctor, who was still calculating the

* The gate of the palace, where public business is transacted.

expenses of his entertainment to the Shah, and had resolved upon adopting a system of more rigid economy in his household, was not sorry to lose an hungry hanger-on, and without hesitation he promised to assist me. It was agreed between us, that he would forthwith call upon the chief executioner, and appointed me to meet him at court, after the morning's *Selam* (levee) was over. As soon, therefore, as the mid-day prayer had been announced from the mosque, I went to the palace, and took my station without the room which is appropriated for the use of the head executioner, and which is situated with its large window immediately facing the principal gate. Several persons were collected there. He himself was taken up with saying his prayers in a corner, and apparently completely abstracted from a conversation that was carrying on between my friend the poet laureat and the under-master of ceremonies.

The latter was describing to the former the death of the unfortunate Nasakchi, and

was mixing a considerable portion of the marvellous in his narrative, when the chief executioner, from the middle of his devotions, cried out, '*Een derough est,*'—'that's a lie—have patience, and I will tell you how it was,' and then went on with his holy invocations. As soon as they were over, and almost before he had finished his last prostration, he began his story, relating the fact with infinitely more exaggeration than the master of the ceremonies had done, and finishing by a round assertion, that the Frank had bled the poor man to death, after the Persian doctor had brought him to life only by shaking him.

During the chief executioner's narration, Mirza Ahmak entered the room, and far from denying what was asserted of the two doctors, he confirmed it the more by new and stronger circumstances, and then finished by pointing to me, and said, 'This is he who would have saved the Nasakchi's life, if he had not been prevented.' Upon this, the eyes of all present were turned upon me,

and I was called upon to relate the whole circumstance as it had happened, which I did, making my version coincide as nearly as possible with what had been already related; but giving all the merit of the science which I had displayed to the tuition of the chief physician. Mirza Ahmak, elated by my praise, was full of zeal to serve me, and he then introduced me to the chief executioner as a man fit and willing to undertake the office of the deceased Nasakchi.

'How!' said the head of the Nasakchies, 'a doctor become an executioner! how can that be?'

'There is no harm in that,' said the poet, (looking at the doctor through the corner of his eye)—'they are both in the same line—the one does his business with more certainty than the other, that's true; but after all, it signifies little whether a man dies gradually by a pill, or at once by a stroke of the scymitar.'

'As for that,' retorted Mirza Ahmak, 'to judge of others by you, poets are in the same

line too; for they murder men's reputations; and every body will agree with me, that that is a worse sort of killing than the doctor's (as you were pleased to say), or the Nasakchi's.'

'That's all very well,' exclaimed the chief executioner; 'you may kill in any manner you choose, provided you leave me the soldier's manner. Give me good hard fighting—let me have my thrust with the lance, and my cut with the sabre, and I want nothing more—let me snuff up the smell of gunpowder, and I leave the scent of the rose to you, Mr. Poet—give me but the roar of cannon, and I shall never envy you the song of the nightingale.—We all have our weaknesses—these are mine.'

'Yes,' said the master of the ceremonies, addressing himself to the whole assembly: 'Every body knows your several merits. The Shah particularly (who by the by has studied the art of killing as well as any of you) is frequently expressing his delight, that of all the monarchs which Persia ever

had, he is the best served; and with that feeling he talks of carrying his arms into the very heart of Georgia. If the Russians once hear that you are going amongst them,' addressing himself to the chief executioner, 'they may begin to make their accounts clear in this world, and prepare for the next.'

'What are the Russians?' said the executioner, with half a shrug and half a shiver; 'they are dust—they are nothing—the possession of Georgia by the Russians is to Persia what a flea which has got into my shirt is to me: it teazes me now and then, but if I gave myself the least trouble, I would hunt it out in a minute. The Russians are nothing.' Then, as if he were anxious to wave the subject, he turned to me, and said: 'Well, I agree to take you into the service, provided you are as fond of the smell of powder as I am. A Nasakchi must have the strength of a Rustam, the heart of a lion, and the activity of a tiger.' Then looking at me from head to foot, he

seemed pleased with my appearance, and forthwith ordered me to go to his *Naib*, or lieutenant, who would equip me for my office, and give me instructions respecting the duties which I should have to perform.

I found the Naib in the midst of preparations for the departure of the Shah, giving his orders, and receiving the reports of those under his command. As soon as he was informed that I was the man appointed to succeed the deceased officer, he put me in possession of his horse and its accoutrements, gave me strict injunctions to take the greatest care of it, and informed me that I could not be provided with another unless I brought back its tail and the mark peculiar to the royal horses, which is burnt on its flank. My stipend was fixed at thirty tomauns per annum, with food for myself and horse. I found myself in dress and arms, except a small hatchet, which indicated my office, and which was provided by the government.

But before I proceed further, it is neces-

sary that I make my reader acquainted with the person and character of Namerd Khan, my new master. He was a tall, square-shouldered, bony man, about forty-five years of age—young enough to be still called a *khûb jûan* (a fine youth). The features of his face were cast in a deep mould, and shaded by black and thick eyebrows, as well as by a jet black beard and mustachios. His hand was particularly large and muscular; and from the black hairs that curled out from the crevices of his shirt, it was evident that his fur was of the thickest quality. Altogether he was of a figure commanding, but coarse, and looked his office greatly to the advantage of the peace of the city, for the very sight of him was sufficient to awe the evil-minded. He was the most celebrated *khôsh guzerân* (sensualist) in Tehran. He drank wine without compunction, and freely cursed the mollahs, who promised him a seat in the regions below for holding the injunctions of the Prophet so cheap.

His house was the seat of revelry; the noise of singing and tambours was heard there from night till morning. He kept men dancers and women dancers; and was the protector of every *Lûti* *, however impudent and obscene he might be. But with all this, he did not in the least relax in the severities of his office; and one might frequently hear, amid the sounds of revelry, the cries and groans of some unfortunate wretch who was writhing under the torture of the bastinado on his feet. He was an excellent horseman, and very dexterous at the spear exercise; and although there was every thing in his appearance to make one believe that he was a soldier and a man of prowess, yet in fact he was a most errant coward. He endeavoured to conceal this defect of his nature by boasting and big words; and succeeded in persuading those who did not know his real character, that he was among the modern Persians, what

* *Luti* here is used in the sense of *polisson*.

Sâm and Afrasiâb* were among the ancient.

His lieutenant, a man of stern aspect, was an active and intelligent officer: he understood the management of his chief, whom he flattered into a belief, that, besides the Shah and himself, no one was worthy to be called a man in Persia. I soon discovered that his prevailing passion was avarice; for when he found that I was to be installed in my office without making him a present, there was no end to the difficulties which he threw in my way. However, by dint of making use of that tongue which nature had given me, and persuading him, in his turn, that he was the cream of lieutenants, and the very best of materials for the future executioner in chief, he relaxed in his dislike, and even flattered me so much as to say, that, by the blessing of Allah, the

* Celebrated heroes in the *Shahnameh*, a book which is believed, by the present Persians, to contain their ancient history.

benign and the merciful, he believed that I should not fail to become in time an ornament to the profession.

I still kept my lodging at the doctor's house until the period of the Shah's departure, and filled up my time in preparing for the journey. The very circumstance of being a Nasakchi gave me consequence in the bazar, and I found no difficulty in procuring every thing I wanted upon credit. During my stay with the doctor, I had managed to set myself up with a small capital of necessaries, which I had procured either in presents from patients, or by happy contrivances of my own. As for instance, I wanted a bed, a quilt, and a pillow: a poor man happening to die under our charge, I assured his relations, whom I knew to be the most bigoted of Mussulmans, that his death could be no fault of ours, for no one could doubt the skill with which he had been treated, but that the bed upon which he lay must be unfortunate; for in the first place, the quilt was

of silk*; and in the next, the foot of the bed had not been turned towards the kebleh†, as it ought to have been: this was enough for the family to discard the bed, and it became mine.

A looking-glass was necessary to my toilet: a mirza, sick of the jaundice, looked at himself in one which he possessed, and was horror-struck at his colour. I assured him that it only proceeded from a defect in the glass, for that in fact he was as fresh as a rose. He threw it away, and I took it home with me.

No one was stricter than Mirza Ahmak himself in all the exteriors of religion, and scrupulous to a fault about things forbidden as unclean. I was in want of a pair of *yakhdans*, or trunks, and a pair belonging to the doctor, which were lying idle in an unfrequented room, were frequently the objects of my contemplation. How shall I manage to become master of these?

* Strict Mussulmans hold silk unclean.

† In the direction of Mecca.

thought I: had I but half the invention of Dervish Sefer, I should already have been packing up my things in them. A thought struck me: one of the many curs, which range wild throughout Tehran, had just pupped under a ruined archway, close to our house. Unseen, I contrived to lodge the whole litter within one of the trunks, and to make a deposit of old bones in the other. When they came to be moved, preparatory to the doctor's journey (for he always accompanies the Shah), the puppies and their mother set up such a confusion of yells, that the servant who had disturbed them ran breathless with the information to the doctor, who, followed by his household, including myself, proceeded to the spot. As soon as the state of the case had been ascertained, many were struck by the singularity of the circumstance, as an omen portending no good to the doctor's house. One said, 'This comes of marrying the khanum; she will give

him a houseful of *haram zadehs**.' Another said, 'The puppies are yet blind: God grant that we and the doctor may not become so likewise!' The doctor himself was only vexed by the loss of his trunks; he pronounced them to be *nejes* (unclean) from that moment, and ordered them, puppies, bitch and all, immediately to be expelled. I was not long in appropriating them; and very soon assumed all the consequence of a man possessing trunks, which also implied things worthy to be put into them. Little by little, I scraped together a sufficient quantity of effects to be able to talk big about my baggage; and when preparations for our departure were making, I held myself entitled to the privilege of squabbling with the king's mule-drivers concerning the necessity of a mule for carrying it.

* Illegitimate born.

CHAPTER VII.

He accompanies the Shah to his camp, and gets some insight into his profession.

At length the day of departure for Saltanieh was fixed by the astrologers. The Shah left his palace just half an hour before sunrise, on the 21st *Rebbi** *el evel*, and travelled without drawing bridle, until he reached his palace of Sulimanieh, which is situated on the banks of the Caraj, at a distance of nine parasangs from Tehran. The different corps composing the army to be collected at Sultanieh were ordered to meet there at a given time, whilst the Shah's escort was to consist only of his body guard, his camel artillery, and a heavy squadron of cavalry. The great officers of the court,

* The third month in the Arabic calendar.

with the viziers, and those employed in the public offices, departed at about the same time, and thus the city was bereft, almost in one day, of nearly two-thirds of its population. Every thing and every body were in motion; and a stranger would have thought that all the inhabitants, like bees hiving, by one common consent had broken up housekeeping, and were about to settle in some other place. Strings of mules and camels, laden with beds, carpets, cooking utensils, tents, horse furniture and provisions of all sorts, were seen making their way through each avenue, raising an impenetrable dust, whilst their conductors mingled their cries with the various toned bells which decked their beasts.

On the morning of departure, I was stationed at the Casbîn gate to keep order, and to prevent any impediment to the Shah's passage. The peasants bringing provisions to the city, who are in waiting every day previously to opening the gates, were ordered to take another direction.

The road was watered by all the sakas of the town, and every precaution taken to make the royal exit as propitious as possible. In particular, no old woman was permitted to be seen, lest the Shah might cast a look upon her, and thus get a stroke of the evil eye.

I found within myself an energy and a vigour in driving the people about, that I never thought appertained to my character; for I recollected well, when one of the mob, how entirely I abominated every man in office. I made use of my stick so freely upon the heads and backs of the crowd, that my brother executioners quite stared, and wondered what demon they had got amongst them. I was anxious to establish a reputation for courage, which I expected would in time promote me to a higher situation.

At length the procession began to move forwards. A detachment of camel artillery had proceeded on the evening before to receive the Shah when he should alight

at Sulimanieh; and now was heard the salute which announced his leaving the palace at Tehran. All was hushed into anxiety and expectation. The chief executioner himself, mounted upon a superb charger, galloped through the streets in haste; and horsemen were seen running to and fro, all intent upon the one object of preparing the road. First came the heralds; then the led horses, magnificently caparisoned in jewellery, shawls, and cloth of gold; after them the running footmen; then the Shah in person; the princes succeeded, followed by the viziers; and last of all an immense body of cavalry.

When it is mentioned that every man of any consequence was accompanied by his train of attendants, most of whom had also their trains; and when the sum total of mirzas, of servants, of pipe-bearers, of cooks and scullions, of carpet-spreaders, of running-footmen, of grooms and horses, of mule drivers and camel drivers, and of ten thousand other camp followers is reckoned

up, the imagination may perhaps conceive what was the crowd which passed before me in succession, as I stood at the Casbîn gate. When the Shah approached, his long beard floating to his girdle, with all the terrors of despotism concentrated in his person, I could not help feeling an odd sort of sensation about my neck; and I made my lowest prostration to that power, which by a single nod might have ordered my head to take leave of my shoulders, even before I could make an objection.

The whole procession having cleared the city gates, I lingered behind to smoke with the guards who are there stationed; and at that time the women of one of the viziers who were permitted to accompany him to camp passing by, brought Zeenab once again to my recollection. I sighed profoundly, when I reflected on the probable miserable fate which awaited her. She had been sent (so I heard from Nûr Jehan the day before our departure) to a small summer-house belonging to the Shah, situated

at the foot of the high mountains which surround Tehran, where, with many other of the bazigers, she was to receive her education of dancing, music, and tumbling. The Shah had ordered that she was to be mistress of these accomplishments previously to his return in the autumn; when she would be honoured by the permission of exhibiting before him. As I rode away, I could not help turning my head towards the spot where she was now confined, and which I could just discern a speck at the foot of the mountain. Perhaps at any other time I should have left every duty to endeavour to obtain a glimpse of her; but I was called up to head the procession again, and to be in readiness at Sulimanieh when the king should alight from his horse.

The day's march, and the attendance at my post being at an end, I proceeded to the quarters of the chief executioner, where I found a small tent prepared for me and five other Nasakchis, who were destined to be my companions for the remainder of the

journey. I had already made their acquaintance in the city; but now we were brought into closer contact, for our tent was not more than six *ghez** long and four broad, and we were thus thrown almost one upon the other. I, as the junior, fared of course the worst; but I determined to put the best face possible upon any present inconveniencies, anticipating many future advantages, which a certain confidence in my own pretty self whispered to me I should not fail to secure.

In addition to the chief executioner's naib, there was also a sub-lieutenant, who must have a place in my narrative, because, in fact, it was through him that I ultimately became noticed by the higher powers. His name was Shîr Ali, in rank a *Beg*, and a Shirazi by birth. Although natives of the two rival cities of Persia, yet without any particular previous cause, and by a combination of those nothings

* A ghez is not quite a yard.

which give rise to most friendships, we became inseparable companions. He had given me a piece of water melon one hot day when I was thirsty; I had lighted his pipe for him on another occasion: he had bled me with his penknife when I had overloaded my stomach with too much rice; and I had cured his horse of the colic by administering an injection of tobacco-water: in short, one thing led on to another, until a very close intimacy was established between us. He was three years older than I, tall, handsome, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, with the prettiest oval beard possible, just long enough to fringe round his chin, and with two large curls, twisting beautifully behind his ear, like a vine curling over the garden wall.

He had been long enough in the service to acquire all the tricks of his profession; for when we came to converse upon the subject, it was surprising what a vast field for the exercise of genius he threw open to my view.

He said, 'Do not suppose that the salary which the Shah gives his servants is a matter of much consideration with them: no, the value of their places depends upon the range of extortion which circumstances may afford, and upon their ingenuity in taking advantage of it. As, for instance, take our chief: his salary is 1000 tomauns per annum, which may or may not be regularly paid; that signifies little to him. He spends at least five or six times that sum; and how is he to get it, if it flows not from the contributions of those who come under his cognizance? A khan has incurred the Shah's displeasure; he is to be beaten and fined: the chief executioner beats and mulcts in the inverse proportion of the present which the sufferer makes him. A rebel's eyes are to be put out; it depends upon what he receives, whether the punishment is done rudely with a dagger, or neatly with a penknife. He is sent on an expedition at the head of an army; wherever he goes presents are sent him

from the towns and villages on his road to induce him not to quarter his troops upon them; and he uses his discretion, according to the value of what he receives, in choosing his halting stations. Most of those in high offices, even the viziers, make him annual gifts, in case the day of the Shah's displeasure should come, and then they would hope to be dealt with gently by him. In short, wherever a stick is to be brandished, wherever punishment is to be inflicted, there the chief executioner levies his dues; and they descend in a gradual measure from him to the lowest of his officers. Before I was a naib, and when I was called upon to lay the bastinado on some wretched culprit, many is the time that my compassion has been moved by a direct appeal to my purse; and then, instead of beating the sufferer's feet, I struck the *felek* upon which they rested. It was but last year that the principal secretary of state incurred the wrath of the Shah. He was ordered to receive the bastinado, and, by way of distinction,

a small carpet was spread for him to lie upon: I and another were the operators, whilst two more held the felek. When we were taking the shawl and cap from his head, his girdle and outer coat (which became our lawful perquisites), he whispered to us, low enough not to be heard by the Shah (for this was all done in his presence), 'By the mothers that bore you, do not beat me much! I'll give you each ten tomauns if you will not strike me.' His heels were tripped up, his feet placed in the noose, whilst his back reposed on the carpet; and then we set to work. For our own sakes, we were obliged to start fair, and we laid on until he roared sufficiently; and then, having ably made him increase his offer until he had bid up to any price we wished, we gradually ceased beating his feet, and only broke our sticks over the felek. Much ingenuity was displayed on both sides, in order that the Shah might not discover that there was any understanding between us. His bidding was interwoven with his groans,

something after this manner:—'*Ahi amān! amān!* For pity's sake, by the soul of the Prophet! twelve tomauns.—By the love of your fathers and mothers! fifteen tomauns. —By the king's beard! twenty tomauns.—By all the Imâms! by all the prophets! thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, hundred, thousand,—any thing you want.' When it was over, we soon found that his generosity had diminished quite as rapidly as it had before increased, and we were satisfied to receive what he first offered to us, which he was obliged to give, fearing if a similar misfortune again overtook him, we should then show him no mercy.

Shîr Ali, holding this sort of language, gave me such an insight into the advantages of my situation, that I could dream of nothing but bastinadoing, and getting money. I went about all day flourishing a stick over my head, practising upon any object that had the least resemblance to human feet, and to such perfection did I bring my hand, that I verily believe I could

have hit each toe separately, had I been so ordered. The first impulse of my nature was not cruelty, that I knew: I was neither fierce nor brave, that I also knew: I therefore marvelled greatly how of a sudden I had become such an unsainted lion*. The fact is, the example of others always had the strongest influence over my mind and actions; and I now lived in such an atmosphere of violence and cruelty, I heard of nothing but of slitting noses, cutting off ears, putting out eyes, blowing up in mortars, chopping men in two, and baking them in ovens, that, in truth, I am persuaded, with a proper example before me, I could almost have impaled my own father.

* *Shír bi pír*—a lion without a saint, is a favourite Persian epithet, when applied to a desperado, a fellow without compassion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Employed in his official capacity, Hajji Baba gives a specimen of Persian despotism.

The Shah moved slowly towards Sultanieh, and at length, after fourteen days' march, when a fortunate hour had been selected for his arrival, he took possession of the summer palace, which has of late days been erected there for his residence. Situated on a hill, not far from the remains of the ancient city, it commands a view of the whole plain, which now, to an immense extent, was covered with the white tents of the camp. It was a magnificent sight, and I felt all the importance of the Nasakchi rising in my breast, as I contrasted my present situation with my wretched and forlorn condition when an inmate in the tents of

the Turcomans. 'In short, I am somebody now,' said I to myself; 'formerly I was one of the beaten, now I am one of the beaters. I should just do for an example of the active and passive participle, with which my old master, the mollah at Ispahan, used to puzzle me, when endeavouring to instil a little Arabic into my mind. Please Heaven that my good dispositions towards my fellow-creatures may soon have an opportunity of being displayed.'

Scarcely I had made these reflections, when Shîr Ali came up to me, and said, 'Our fortune has taken a flight upwards: you are to accompany me, and *Inshallah!* please Allah! we shall make clean work of it. You must know, that the provisions for the king's camp are supplied, in great measure, by the surrounding villages. It seems that the village of Kadj Sawar, situated between this and Hamadan, has not sent its quota, upon a pretext that one of the princes, with his suite, not long ago, on a hunting excursion, had there settled him-

self for several days, and eaten the inhabitants out of house and home. I am ordered to proceed thither, to investigate the business, and to conduct the *ked khoda* (the head man), with the elders of the village, before our chief. Since you are my friend, I have received permission to take you with me, although the other Nasakchis complain that they have lost their turn. You must be ready to join me after the evening prayer, for I intend to be there to-morrow morning.'

I was overjoyed to find myself so soon brought into action; and, although I did not know precisely the plan of operations which Shîr Ali would adopt, yet I had wit enough to perceive that a great field was open to the ingenuity of fellows like us, who are always guided by the * state of the weather. 'Our star will be an evil one, indeed,' said I, 'if that destructive prince has left us nothing to glean. Some poet

* The expression is '*hawa been*,' which answers to our 'time-servers,' but which literally signifies what has been given in the text.

once said 'no melon is so bad but hath its rind, and although a tyrant may pluck out a beard by the roots, yet still the chin is left upon which it grew.'' With these thoughts in my head I went to my horse, which, with the other Nasakchi's horses, was picketed near our tents, and prepared him for the journey. Casting off his head and heel ropes, I could not help comparing him to myself.—'Now,' said I, 'beast! you are free to kick and plunge, and do what mischief you can;' and so, thought I, is the Persian when absolved from the fear of his master.

Shîr Ali and I quitted the camp at sunset, accompanied by a lad, seated on the top of a loaded mule, that carried our beds; and the coverings, ropes, &c. for our horses. Since I had become a soldier, I also had attached the title of Beg to my name: and, to add to my importance in this expedition, I borrowed a silver chain for my horse's head, and a handsome silver mounted pistol for my girdle, from one of my comrades,

and promised to bring him a *soghât*, or present, in case the harvest proved abundant.

We travelled all night, and, having slept for two hours at a village on the road, reached Kadj Sawar just as the women were driving the cattle from their stables, and the men smoking their pipes, previously to going to their work in the field. As soon as we were perceived making for the village, it was evident that a great stir was produced. The women ceased from their cries, and hid their faces, and the men arose from their seats. I wish my reader could have seen the air and countenance which Shîr Ali Beg put on as we approached. He swelled himself out at least into the size of the chief executioner himself, and with a tone of authority, which sufficiently indicated who and what he was, inquired for the chief of the village. A plain man, with a gray beard, humble mien, and still humbler clothing, stepped forward, and said, 'Peace be with you, Aga! I am he; I am your servant. May your footsteps be

fortunate, and your shadow never be less!' And then saying '*Bismillah!*' in the name of God! we were helped off our horses with all due respect. One held the horse's head, another the stirrup, whilst a third put his hand under the arm-pit, and thus we alighted, giving ourselves as much weight as we could, and making up our backs like men of consequence. A small carpet was spread at the door of the ked khoda's house, to which we had been conducted, followed by almost all the male population of the village, and there we seated ourselves until a room within was prepared. The ked khoda himself pulled off our boots, and otherwise performed all the acts of politeness and attention which are shown to guests on their arrival. Shîr Ali having received this with the dignity of one who thought it his due, and having let off several long whiffs from his pipe, said, with great emphasis, to our host, 'You, that are the ked khoda of Kadj Sawar, know, that I am

come on the part of Shah,—on the part of the Shah again, I say,—that I am come to know why this village has not sent its quota of provisions for the use of the royal camp at Sultanieh, according to the order issued in the firman two months ago, signified to you by the governor of Hamadan?—Give me an answer, and make your face white if you can.'

The ked khoda answered, 'Yes, by my eyes! what I have said before I will say now. All these men present (pointing to his fellow villagers) know it to be the truth; and if I lie, may I become stone blind! *Arz mi kunum*, I beg leave to state, O Nasakchi! that you, by the blessing of God, you, in fine, are a man,—you are a wise, a clever, and a sharp-sighted man, —you are also a Mussulman, and you fear God. I shall not say more than the truth, nor less; I shall explain what has happened, and then leave you to decide.'

'Well, well, say on,' said Shîr Ali; 'I

am the king's servant: whatever the Shah will decide, that you must look to.'

'You are the master,' replied the ked khoda; 'but pray give ear to my tale. About three months ago, when the wheat was nearly a *gez* high, and lambs were bleating all over the country, a servant belonging to the Prince Kharab Cûli Mirza announced to us, that his master would take up his quarters in the village the next day, in order to hunt in the surrounding country, which abounds in antelopes, wild asses, partridges, bustards, and game of all descriptions. He ordered the best houses to be in readiness for him and his suite, turned out their inhabitants, and made demands for provisions of all sorts. As soon as this intelligence was known, alarm was spread throughout the village, and seeing that nothing was to be done with the Prince's servant, either by bribe or persuasion, to evade the disaster, we determined to abandon our houses and take to the

mountains until the evil day had gone by. Had you seen the state of these poor peasants, when forced to abandon every thing they had in the world, your heart would have turned upside down, and your liver would have become water.'

'What do you mean?' exclaimed Shîr Ali: 'the Shah's villages are left desolate, and I am to pity the fugitives? No, they would have all been put to death had the Shah known it.'

'For pity's sake,' continued the old villager, 'hear the end of my story, and allow yourself to be softened. We loaded our cattle at nightfall with every thing we could carry away, and took to the mountains, where we settled in a dell, close to a stream of running water. There only remained behind three sick old women and the village cats.'

'Do you hear that, Hajjî?' said my companion, addressing himself to me: 'they carried away every thing valuable, and left

the bare walls, and their old women to the Prince. Well,' said he to the ked khoda, 'proceed.'

'We sent spies from time to time,' continued the old man, 'to bring intelligence of what was doing, and took up our abode among the rocks and cliffs of the mountains. About noon the next day the party appeared, and when they discovered that we had fled, their rage and disappointment were great. The servants of the Prince went from house to house, and drove in the doors with violence. The only object which at all restrained them was one of the old women, who having acquired sufficient strength to rise from her bed, attacked them with such reproaches, that none was bold enough to face her. The Prince sent for provisions from a neighbouring town, and took up his abode in my house. Wherever they found corn, they seized upon it; they burnt our implements of husbandry for firewood, and when they were expended had recourse to doors and

windows, and even to the beams and rafters of our houses. Their horses were picketed in the new wheat, and they even cut down a great extent of it to carry away. In short, we are entirely ruined; we have neither money, clothes, cattle, houses, nor provisions; and, except in God and you,' addressing himself to Shîr Ali and me, 'we have no other refuge.'

Upon this Shîr Ali Beg jumped up from his seat, took the old man vigorously by the beard, and said, 'Are not you ashamed, old man, with these gray hairs, to utter such lies? But a moment ago you told us that you had carried into the mountains all that was most valuable, and now pretend that you are ruined. This can never be! We have not travelled all this way to eat your dirt. If you think that we have brought our beards to market to be laughed at, you are mistaken. You don't yet know Shîr Ali: we are men who sleep with one eye open and the other shut; no fox steals from its hole without our knowledge: if you think

yourself a cat, we are the fathers of cats. Your beard must be a great deal longer, you must have seen much more country, before you can expect to take us in.'

'No, God forgive me!' said the ked khoda, 'if I have thought to deceive you. Who am I, that should dare to think so? We are the Shah's *rayats*, peasantry; whatever we have is his; but we have been stripped, we have been skinned; go, see with your own eyes—look at our fields—look into our store-rooms—we have neither corn abroad nor corn at home.'

'Well,' said Shîr Ali, 'skinned or unskinned, with corn or without it, we have only one course to pursue, and one word to say,—the Shah's orders must be executed. Either you deliver in kind or in money, your prescribed quota of provisions, or you and your elders must proceed with us to Sultanieh, where you will be consigned over to the proper authorities.'

After these words, much whispering and consultation took place between the ked

khoda and the village elders, who having huddled themselves into a corner, left us wrapt up in our own dignity, smoking our pipes, with apparently the greatest indifference.

At length the result of their conference was made known, and they changed their order of attack; for the chief of the village now undertook to soften me, and another old man Shîr Ali Beg. The former approached me with every manifestation of great friendship, and began, as usual, by flattery. According to him, I was the most perfect of God's creatures. He then swore that I had excited feelings of love both in his breast, and in that of all the villagers, and that I alone was the person to extricate them from their difficulties. As long as this lasted, I merely kept a steady countenance, and made play with my pipe; but when he had a little more entered into particulars, and talked of what we were likely to get, I must own that I became considerably more interested. He said that they had con-

sulted upon what was to be done; and were unanimous, that to send what they had not was impossible, and therefore out of the question; but perhaps if something could be offered to us to protect their interests, they were ready to satisfy us on that head.

'All this is very well,' said I, 'but I am not the only person to be considered. We here are only two, but recollect that our chief must be also satisfied, and if you do not begin by him, your labour and expense will be in vain: and I can tell you, if you grease his palm, you must measure your *roghun* (grease) by the *maun**, and not by the *miscal*.'

'Whatever we possess,' said the ked khoda, 'we will give; but of late taxation has been so heavy, that, excepting our wives and children, we have in fact nothing to offer.'

'I tell you what, friend,' said I, 'unless

* A maun is seven pounds and a half; a miscal, twenty-four grains.

you have money, ready downright cash, to give, any other offer is useless: with money in your hand, you may buy the Shah's crown from his head; but without it, I can only promise you a harvest of bastinadoes.'

'Ah!' said the ked khoda, 'money, money! where are we to procure money? Our women, when they get a piece, bore a hole through it, and hang it about their necks by way of ornament; and if we, after a life of hard toil, can scrape up some fifty tomauns, we bury them in the earth, and they give us more anxiety than if we possessed the mountain* of light.' Then approaching to put his mouth to my ear, he whispered with great earnestness, 'You are a Mussulman, in fine, and no ass. You do not conceive that we will go into the lion's mouth if it can be avoided; tell me, (pointing to my companion) how much will he be contented with?—can I offer him five

* The Shah's great diamond, which he wears in one of his armlets, is called the *koh nûr*, or the mountain of light.

tomauns, and a pair of crimson *shalwars* (trowsers)?'

'What do I know,' said I, 'what will satisfy him? all I can say is, that he possesses not a grain of commiseration: make the tomauns ten, and the trowsers a coat, and I will endeavour to make him accept them.'

'Oh, that is too much,' said the old man; 'our whole village is not worth that sum. Satisfy him with the five and the trowsers, and our gratitude will be shown, by a present for yourself that will astonish you.'

Upon this our conference broke off, and I was as anxious to hear what had taken up my companion, as he was impatient to learn the result of my whisperings with the ked khoda. Comparing notes, we found that both the old villagers had been endeavouring to ascertain what might be our respective prices. I assured Shîr Ali, that I had given him out for the veriest crucible in Persia, saying, that he could digest more gold than an ostrich could iron, and was

withal so proud, that he rejected units as totally unworthy of notice, and never took less than tens.

'Well said,' answered Shîr Ali; 'and I told my old negotiator, that unless you were handsomely paid, you were equal to any violence, notwithstanding your silence and quiet looks.'

At length, after some delay, the whole party came forward again, headed by the ked khoda, who, bringing an ostensible present of apples, pears, a pot of honey, and some new cheese, begged my companion to accept it, in terms usually made on such occasions. When it had been spread before us, in an under tone of voice the ked khoda made his offer of five tomauns and the trowsers, and talked of his misery and that of his village in a manner which would have melted any breast but that of Shîr Ali.

We agreed at once to reject the present, and ordered it to be taken from before us. This produced considerable dismay among the poor people, and they walked off with

their trays of fruit, &c. on their heads, with slow and sorrowful steps.

In about half an hour they appeared again, the ked khoda having previously ascertained that if he came with the ten tomauns and a coat, the present would be accepted. When we had eaten thereof, Shîr Ali Beg having pocketed his gold and secured his coat, I began to look for that something for myself which was to astonish me: nothing, however, was produced, notwithstanding certain significant winks and blinks with which the ked khoda ever and anon kept me in play.

'Where is it?' said I to him at last, quite out of patience. 'What is it? how much?'

'It is coming,' said he; 'have a little patience; it is not yet quite prepared.'

At length, after some waiting, with great parade, the pair of trowsers, which had been rejected by Shîr Ali, were placed before me on a tray, and offered for my acceptance, accompanied by a profusion of fine words.

'What news is this?' exclaimed I: 'do you know, ye men without shame!' addressing myself to those who stood before me, 'that I am an executioner,—one who can burn your fathers, and can give you more grief to devour than you have ever yet experienced? What mean ye by bringing me this pair of frouzy *shalwars?* That which has passed through many generations of your ignoble ancestors, do ye now pretend to put off upon me? Fools indeed you must be, to suppose that I will espouse your interests, and set forth your grievances, merely for the sake of this dirty rag! Away with it, or you will see what a Nasakchi can do!'

Upon this they were about complying with my orders, when Shîr Ali Beg stopped them, and said, 'Let me look at the trowsers. Ah,' said he, holding them up at the same time between his eyes and the sun, and examining them with all the care of an old clothes' broker, 'they will do; they have

no defect: be it so, they are my property, and many thanks for them. May your family prosper!"

Every one looked astonished; no one dared make an objection; and thus I, who had been anticipating such great advantages, lost even the miserable perquisite which I might have had, and only gained sufficient experience to know another time how to deal with my countrymen, and, moreover, how to trust one who called himself my friend.

CHAPTER IX.

Fortune, which pretended to frown, in fact smiles upon Hajjî Baba, and promotes him to be sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner.

Two fat lambs, which were tied on our baggage mule, were the only present we brought with us for our chief. As soon as we reached the camp, we immediately presented ourselves to the Naib, who forthwith carried us before the executioner, who was seated in his tent, in conversation with one or two of his friends.

'Well,' said he to Shîr Ali, 'what have you done? Have you brought the corn, or the ked khoda, which?'

'I beg leave to state for your service,' said Shîr Ali, 'neither. The ked khoda and the elders of Kadj Sawar have sent two lambs to be laid at your feet; and they have convinced us with our own eyes, that ex-

cepting them, not a thing have they left, not even their own souls, so entirely and completely have they been pillaged: on the contrary, if food be not sent to them, they will eat up one another.'

'Do you say so, indeed!' exclaimed the khan: 'if they have lambs, they must also have sheep. By what account do you reckon?'

'That's true,' said Shîr Ali, 'and every thing that you say is equally so; but we were talking of corn, and not of sheep.'

'But why did not you follow your orders, and bring the ked khoda and the elders?' said our chief. 'If I had been there, the rogues, I would have roasted them alive. I would have tied them with the camel tie, until they confessed that they had something. Tell me, why did you not bring them?'

'We wished much to bring them,' said Shîr Ali, looking at me to help him out. 'Yes, we had bound them all together, and we wanted very much to bring them: we

also beat and abused them. Hajjî Baba knows it all; for Hajjî Baba told them if they had not money to give, they would certainly meet with no mercy. Mercy was a thing totally out of our way; for if they knew any thing, they must be aware that our khan, our lord and master, the Nasakchi Bashi, was a man of such invincible courage, of a resolution so great, and of bowels so immovable, that if once they got within his grasp, it was all over with them. Yes, we told them all that, and they almost sunk into the earth.'

'What does he say, Hajjî Baba?' said the khan, turning round to me: I have not quite understood why these men were not brought to me?'

I answered in great humility, 'Indeed, O khan, I also do not understand. Shîr Ali Beg, who is your deputy-lieutenant, had the whole business in his hands. I went in his service; I am nobody.'

Upon this the khan got into a violent rage, and branded us by every odious name

of contempt and reproach that he could think of. 'It is plain,' said he to his friends, 'that these villains have been playing tricks. Tell me,' said he to Shîr Ali, 'by my soul, by the king's salt, tell me, how much have you got for yourself? And you, Aga Hajjî,' addressing himself to me, 'you, who have scarcely been a month in service, how much have you secured?'

In vain we both protested our innocence; in vain we swore that there was nothing to gain; nobody would believe us; and the scene ended by our being driven out of the tent in custody of the naib, who was ordered to confine us until the chiefs of the village should have been actually brought to the camp, and confronted with us.

When Shîr Ali and I were left to ourselves, he immediately endeavoured to make me a partaker of the spoil, and offered to give me up half of it.

'Not so, my friend,' said I; 'it is now too late. If you have drank and enjoyed the forbidden wine, and have got a head-

ache by it, it is no reason that you should endeavour to make me sick too. I have had a lesson, in which you have acted as master, which will satisfy me for this time.'

He then endeavoured to make me promise to stand by him, when we should be confronted with the ked khoda, and to swear through thick and thin to every thing that he intended to advance; but I was too much alive to the consequences to make any such promise. He said that if once he were brought to the felek to receive the bastinado, he knew that he could not survive it; for so universal a terrorist had he been when operating upon the feet of others, that now he felt he should be treated without the least mercy; and he therefore swore upon the Korân, that he would undergo every misery rather than be tied to the stake.

When the time came for being called up again before our chief, Shîr Ali was nowhere to be found. He had absconded, and when I was interrogated, all that I could say amounted to this,—that I knew

he dreaded the idea of being bastinadoed, and that I supposed he had made off to escape it.

As soon as I appeared before my judge, the men of Kadj Sawar, who were already standing before him, declared one and all, that I had neither exacted nor received any thing from them; but, on the contrary, that I had urged them to make a considerable present to the khan. They poured out the whole of their complaints against Shîr Ali, who they declared had put the finishing stroke to their misery, and had even torn off the new skin that had began to cover their old wounds.

All this was slowly working for my advantage, and paving the road to my promotion. The story had got abroad, and was in every one's mouth. I was looked upon as a paragon of moderation.

'This comes from having been a doctor,' says one; 'wisdom is better than riches.' 'He knows the doctrine of consequences,' says another; 'his feet will never be where

his head should be.' In short, I had acquired the reputation of being a clever and a cautious fellow, merely owing to events playing fortunately into my hands; and I lost nothing from being looked upon as a man whose *taleh* (luck) was good, and one whose star was fortunate.

The result of this part of my history was, that I was installed in the situation of the fugitive, and became the sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner of Persia—a character, whatever my readers may think of it, of no small consequence, as they will hereafter discover.

CHAPTER X.

Although by trade an executioner, he shows a feeling heart. He meets with a young man and woman in distress.

The Shah was at this time engaged in a war with the Moscovites, who had established themselves in Georgia, and were threatening the frontier provinces of Persia situated between the rivers Kûr and Arras. The governor of Erivan, known by the title of *Serdar* or general, and one of the Shah's most favourite officers, had long ago opened the campaign by desultory attacks upon the advanced posts of the enemy, and by laying waste the villages and country in the track they were likely to keep in advancing towards Persia. An army, under the command of the heir apparent and governor of the great province of Aderbijân, had also

been collected near Tabrîz; and it was intended that he should immediately proceed to the seat of war, in order if possible to drive the enemy back to Teflis, and, according to the language of the court, carry its arms even to the walls of Moscow.

Intelligence was daily expected at the royal camp of Sultanieh, from the Serdar, concerning an attack which he had announced it his intention to make upon the Russian post of Gavmishlû; and orders were issued for giving a suitable reception to the heads of the enemy, which it is always the etiquette to send upon announcing a victory, for such no doubt was expected to be the result of the attack. A *chapper*, or courier, was at length seen riding towards the camp in great haste. He was the conductor of five horse-loads of heads, 'tis true, and they were heaped up with great pomp and parade before the principal entrance of the royal tents; but it became evident that something had taken place which required a reinforcement; for on the

very next morning our chief, Namerd Khan, was appointed to the command of a body of ten thousand cavalry, which were ordered to march immediately to the banks of the Arras.

The *Min Bashies*, the heads of thousands; the *Yûz bashies*, the heads of hundreds; the *On bashies*, the heads of tens; and all the officers commanding the troops, were seen hurrying over the camp in various directions, attending upon their khans, and receiving their orders. The tent of Namerd Khan was filled with the chiefs of the expedition, to whom he distributed his directions, giving them the order of march, and allotting to each division its station in halting at the villages on the route. My duty was to precede the troops by a day, accompanied by a detachment of Nasakchies, to make arrangements for billeting the men in the villages. This was a duty requiring activity and exertion; but at the same time accompanied by great advantages, which, had I chosen to avail myself of, might have

increased the weight of my purse. However, the recent example of Shîr Ali Beg was too strong before my eyes not to repress any desire I might have of levying contributions, so I determined for the present to keep my hands pure, and to quench the flame of covetousness by the waters of prudence.

I set off with my detachment, and reached Erivan several days before the troops could arrive. We here found the Serdar, who, after his attack upon Gavmishlû, had retreated, to wait the reinforcement of the cavalry under our chief. The army under the prince royal had proceeded to another part of the frontier, with the intention of attacking the fortress of Ganja, of which the enemy had recently acquired possession, and unable to spare any of his troops, the Serdar had solicited assistance from the Shah.

As soon as Namerd Khan and the Serdar had met and consulted, it was determined that spies should immediately be sent for-

wards in order to ascertain the position, and the movements of the Russians; and I was fixed upon to head a detachment of twenty men on the part of the chief executioner, whilst a similar number was sent by the Serdar, who at the same time were to be our guides through such parts of the country as were unknown to me.

We assembled at the close of day, and began our march just as the muezzins called the evening prayer. Proceeding at once to the village of Ashtarek, we passed Etchmiazin, the seat of the Armenian patriarch, on our left. It was scarcely dawn of day when we reached the bridge of Ashtarek, still obscured by the deepest shade, owing to the very high and rocky banks of the river, forming, as it were, two abrupt walls on either side. The village itself, situated on the brink of these banks, was just sufficiently lighted up to be distinguished from the rocks among which it was built; whilst the ruins of a large structure, of heavy architecture, rose conspicuous on the darkest

side, and gave a character of solemnity and grandeur to the whole scenery. This, my companions informed me, was the remains of the many Armenian churches so frequently seen in this part of Persia. The river dashed along through its dark bed, and we could perceive the foam of its waters as we began to cross the bridge. The rattle of our horses' hoofs over its pavement had alarmed the village dogs, whose bark we could just distinguish; the shrill crow of a cock was also heard, and most of our eyes were directed towards the houses, when one of our men, stopping his horse, exclaimed, 'Ya, Ali! (oh, Ali!) what is that?' pointing with his hand to the church: 'do not you see, there, something white?'

'Yes, yes,' said another, 'I see it; it's a *ghôl!* without doubt it's a ghôl! This is the true hour: it is in search of a corpse. I dare say it is devouring one now.'

I also could see that something was there, but it was impossible to make it out.

We halted upon the bridge, looking up

with all our eyes, every one being satisfied that it was a supernatural being. One called upon Ali, another upon Hossein, and a third invoked the Prophet and the twelve Imâms. None seemed inclined to approach it, but every one suggested some new mode of exorcism. 'Untie the string of your trowsers,' said an old Irâki, 'that's the way we treat our ghôls, in the desert near Ispahan, and they depart instantly.'

'What good will that do?' answered a *delikhan* (a hare-brained youth); 'I'd rather keep the beast out than let it in.'

In short, what with joking, and what with serious talk, the morning broke sufficiently to convince us that the apparition must have been an illusion of our senses, for nothing now was to be seen. However, having passed the bridge, the said delikhan, shivering in his stirrups, and anxious to gallop his horse, exclaimed, 'I'll go and find the ghôl,' drove his horse up a steep bank, and made towards the ruined church. We saw him return very speedily, with in-

telligence, that what we had taken for a ghôl was a woman, whose white veil had attracted our notice, and that she, with a man, were apparently hiding themselves among the deep shades of the broken walls.

Full of anxiety for whatever might throw a light upon the object of my duty, I lost no time in proceeding to the ruin, in order to ascertain why these people hid themselves so mysteriously, and ordering five men to follow me, I made the rest halt near the bridge.

We saw no one until turning the sharp angle of a wall we found, seated under an arch, the objects of our search. A woman, apparently sick, was extended on the ground, whilst a man leaning over, supported her head, in an attitude of the greatest solicitude. Enough of daylight now shone upon them, to discover that they were both young. The woman's face, partially hid by her veil, notwithstanding its deadly paleness, was surprisingly beautiful; and the youth was the finest specimen of strength, activity,

and manliness that I had ever seen. He was dressed in the costume of Georgia, a long knife hung over his thigh, and a gun rested against the wall. Her veil, which was of the purest white, was here and there stained with blood, and torn in several places. Although I had been living amongst men inured to scenes of misery, utter strangers to feelings of pity or commiseration, yet in this instance I and my companions could not fail being much interested at what we saw, and paused with a sort of respect for the grief of these apparently unfriended strangers, before we ventured to break the silence of our meeting.

'What are you doing here?' said I: 'If you are strangers, and travellers, why do you not go into the village?'

'If you have the feelings of a man,' said the youth, 'give me help, for the love of God! Should you be sent to seize us by the Serdar, still help me to save this poor creature who is dying. I have no resistance to offer; but pray save her.'

'Who are you?' said I. 'The Serdar has given us no orders concerning you. Where do you come from? Whither going?'

'Our story is long and melancholy,' said the young man: 'if you will help me to convey this poor suffering girl where she may be taken care of, I will relate every thing that has happened to us. She may recover with good and kind usage: she is wounded, but I trust not mortally, and with quiet may recover. Thanks to Heaven, you are not one of the Serdar's officers! I intreat you to befriend me, and my lamentable tale may perhaps induce you to take us under your protection.'

This appeal to my feelings was unnecessary: the countenance and appearance of the youth had excited great interest in my breast, and I immediately lent myself to his wishes, telling him that we would, without delay, convey his sick friend to the village, and then, having heard his story, settle what to do for him.

She had to this moment said nothing, but gathered her veil round her with great precaution, now and then uttering low groans, which indicated pain, and venting the apparent misery of her mind by suppressed sighs. I ordered one of my followers to dismount from his horse; we placed her upon it, and immediately proceeded to the village, where, having inspected the interior of several houses, I pitched upon that which afforded the best accommodation, and whose owner appeared obliging and humane; there we deposited her, giving directions that she should be nursed with the greatest care. An old woman of the village, who had the reputation of skill in curing wounds and bruises, was sent for, and she undertook her cure. I learnt from the youth that he and his companion were Armenians; and as the inhabitants of Ashtarek were of the same persuasion, they very soon understood each other, and the poor sufferer felt that she could not have fallen into better hands.

CHAPTER XI.

The history of Yúsúf, the Armenian, and his wife Mariam.

It was my intention to have proceeded to the heights of Aberan, where we should have found a cool region and good pasturage for our horses, before halting for the day; but hearing that the wandering tribes, whom we had expected to find encamped in a certain spot, and upon whose tents and provisions I had reckoned, were removed far into the mountains, fearful of the war which had just broken out, I determined to halt at Ashtarek until the heat of the day should have subsided. Accordingly, my men were quartered in different parts of the village: some settled themselves under the arches of the bridge, picketing their horses among the long grass; one or

two took possession of a mill, situated in the bed of the river, whose wheel was turned by water, made to flow in an elevated channel for the purpose; and I spread my carpet in an open room, built upon a shelf, on the highest part of the rocky bank, from whence I had a view of the whole scene, and also could discern any object that might be coming towards us from the Russian frontier.

Feeling refreshed by two hours sound sleep, upon awaking I sent for the Armenian youth; and whilst the good people of the village served us a light breakfast, of which we were both much in need, I requested him to relate his adventures, and particularly what had brought him into the situation in which he had been discovered. Refreshed with rest and food, the morning sun enlightening the spot we occupied, the manly features of the youth exhibited all their beauty; and, as he spoke, their animation and earnestness helped wonderfully

to convince me that all he said was the truth. He spoke as follows:

'I am an Armenian by birth, and a Christian; my name is Yûsûf. My father is chief of the village of Gavmishlû, inhabited entirely by Armenians, situated not far from the beautiful river of Pembaki, and about six agatch from this place. In the middle of a verdant country, full of the richest pasturage, and enjoying a climate celebrated for coolness and serenity, we are a healthy and a hardy race; and, notwithstanding the numerous exactions of our governors, were happy in our poverty. We live so far within the mountains, that we are more distant from the tyranny usually exercised upon those who abide nearer great towns, the residences of governors; and, secluded from the world, our habits are simple, and our modes of life patriarchal. I had an uncle, my father's brother, a deacon, and an attendant upon the head of our church, the patriarch at Etchmiazin;

and another uncle, by my mother's side, was the priest of our village: therefore my family being well in the church, determined that I should follow the sacred profession. My father himself, who subsisted by tilling the ground, and by his own labour had cleared away a considerable tract near the village, having two sons besides me, expected to receive sufficient help from them in the field, and therefore agreed to spare me for the church. Accordingly, when about ten years old, I went to Etchmiazin to be educated, where I learned to read, write, and perform the church service. I derived great pleasure from instruction, and read every book that came in my way. A very extensive library of Armenian books exists at the convent, of which I managed now and then to get a few; and although mostly on religious subjects, yet it happened that I once got a history of Armenia, which riveted all my attention; for I learnt by it that we once were a nation, having kings, who made themselves respected in the world.

Reflecting upon our degraded state at the present day, and considering who were our governors, I became full of energy to shake off the yoke, and these feelings turned my thoughts from the sacred profession to which I was destined. About this time war broke out between Persia and Russia, and our village lying in the track of the armies marching to the frontiers, I felt that my family would require every protection possible, and that I should be more usefully employed with them than in a cloister. Accordingly, but a short time before taking priest's orders, I left my friends at Etchmiazin, and returned to my father's house. I was welcomed by every one. Already had they felt the horrors of war; for marauding parties of both Persians and Russians (both equally to be feared) had made their appearance, and molested the peaceable and inoffensive inhabitants of ours and the neighbouring villages. This frontier warfare, in its general results, was of no great utility to either of the powers at war, yet to those who

inhabited the seat of it, its consequences were dreadful. We were continually harassed either by the fears of the invading enemy, or by the exactions and molestations of the troops of our own government. Our harvests were destroyed, our cattle dispersed, and ourselves in constant danger of being carried away prisoners. Anxious to preserve our property, and our only resource to keep us from starvation, we continued to till our fields, but went to work with swords by our sides, and guns ready loaded slung at our backs; and when a stranger appeared, whoever he might be, we immediately assembled and made a show of defence. By this means, for several years, we managed, with great difficulty and perseverance, to get in our harvest, and, by the blessing of Providence, had enough to subsist upon. But here I must begin some of those particulars which relate to my individual history.

'About two years ago, when securing our harvest, I had gone out long before the

dawn to reap the corn of one of our most distant fields, armed and prepared as usual. I perceived a Persian horseman, bearing a female behind him, and making great speed through a glen that wound nearly at the foot of a more elevated spot, upon which I was standing. The female evidently had been placed there against her will, for as soon as she perceived me she uttered loud shrieks, and extended her arms. I immediately flew down the craggy side of the mountain, and reached the lowermost part of the glen time enough to intercept the horseman's road. I called out to him to stop, and seconded my words by drawing my sword, and putting myself in an attitude to seize his bridle as he passed. Embarrassed by the burthen behind him, he was unable either to use his sword or the gun slung at his back, so he excited his horse to an increased speed, hoping thus to ride over me; but I stood my ground, and as I made a cut with my sabre, the horse bounded from the road with so sudden a

start, that the frightened woman lost her hold and fell off. The horseman, free of his incumbrance, would now have used his gun; but, seeing mine already aimed at him, he thought it most prudent to continue his road, and I saw nothing more of him.

'I ran to the assistance of the fallen woman, whom by her dress I discovered to be an Armenian. She was stunned and severely bruised: her outward veil had already disengaged itself, and in order to give her air, I immediately pulled away the under veil which hides the lower part of the face (common to the Armenians), and, to my extreme surprise, beheld the most beautiful features that imagination can conceive. The lovely creature whom I supported in my arms was about fifteen years of age. Oh! I shall never forget the thrill of love, delight, and apprehension, which I felt at gazing upon her. I hung over her with all the intenseness of a first passion; a feeling arose in my heart which was new to me,

and, forgetting every thing but the object immediately before me, I verily believe that I should have been for ever riveted to that spot, had she not opened her eyes, and began to show signs of life. The first words she spoke went to my very soul; but when she discovered where she was, and in the hands of an utter stranger, she began to cry and bewail herself in a manner that quite alarmed me. Little by little, however, she became more composed; and when she found that I was one of her own nation and religion, that I was, moreover, her deliverer, she began to look upon me with different feelings: my vanity made me hope that, perhaps, she was not displeased at the interest she had awakened in me. One thing, however, she did not cease to deplore, and to upbraid me with,—I had withdrawn her veil;—there was no forgiveness for me—that indulgence which even a husband scarcely ever enjoys, that distinguishing emblem of chastity and honour, so sacred in the eyes of an Armenian woman,—every

sense of decency had been disregarded by me, and I stood before her in the criminal character of one who had seen all her face. In vain I represented, that had I not relieved her mouth and nose from the pressure of the lower band, she must have suffocated; that her fall having deprived her of all sensation, had she not inhaled the fresh air, death would have been the consequence. Nothing would convince her that she was not a lost woman. However, the following argument had more effect upon her than any other; no one but myself was witness to her dishonour (if such she must call it); and I swore so fervently by the Holy Cross, and by St. Gregorio, that it should remain a profound secret in my heart as long as I had one to keep it in, that she permitted herself at length to be comforted. I then requested her to give me an account of her late adventure, and to tell me from whom it had been my good fortune to liberate her.

"'As for the man,' said she, 'all I know of him is, that he is a Persian. I never saw

him before, and know of no object that he could have had in carrying me off, excepting to sell me for a slave. A few days ago a skirmish took place between a detachment of Persian cavalry and Georgians. The latter were driven back, and the Persians made some prisoners, whom they carried away in great triumph to Erivan. Our village had been occupied by the Persian troops some days before this affray, and I suppose then my ravisher laid his plan to carry me off, and make me pass for a Georgian prisoner. I had just got up in the morning, and had gone to the village-well with my pitcher to bring home water, when he darted from behind a broken wall, showed his knife, threatening to kill me if I did not follow him without noise, and made me mount behind him on his horse. We galloped away just as some other of the village maidens were proceeding to the well, and my only hope of being saved was from the alarm which I knew they would instantly spread. We were out of sight in a few

minutes, for we rode furiously over hill and dale, and cut across parts of the country unfrequented by travellers. At length, seeing you on the brow of the hill, I took courage, and gave vent to my cries, notwithstanding the threats of the Persian. You know the rest.'

'She had scarcely finished speaking when we discovered several persons, one on horseback, the rest on foot, making towards us in great haste, and as they approached and were recognised by my fair one, it was delightful to watch her emotions.

''Oh! there is my father,' exclaimed she, 'and my brothers! there is Ovanes, and Agoop, and Aratoon! and my uncle too!'

'As they came up, she embraced them all with transports of delight. I was in agonies of apprehension lest some youth should appear, who might have excited other feelings in her heart; but no, none but relations were there. They explained to her that the alarm of her seizure had been spread throughout the village by her young

friends; that luckily they had not yet gone to the fields, and the family horse was at home, upon which her father was instantly mounted. They had traced the fresh foot-steps of her ravisher's horse as long as he kept the road, had marked the place where he turned from it, had seen them again in several places, had tracked him through a corn-field that led up a steep slope, and at length, from a high summit, Ovanes had seen them descending a glen, which must had been very near the spot where they had now found her.

"'She said all this was true, and again thanked God and St. Gregory for her escape; and, after some hesitation, in a most embarrassed manner, pointed me out as her deliverer. The attention of the whole party was then directed to me. 'Whose son are you?" said the old man, her father.

"'I am the son of Coja Petros,' said I, 'the chief of the village of Gavmishlû.'

"'Ah! he is my friend and neighbour,' answered he; 'but I do not know you;

perhaps you are the son who was educating at the Three Churches for a priest, and who came to the help of your family?'

'I answered in the affirmative, and then he said 'You are welcome.—May your house prosper!—You have saved our daughter, and we owe you eternal gratitude. You must come with us and be our guest. If ever it were necessary to kill a lamb, to eat and be merry, it is now. We, and all our families, will carry you upon our heads; we will kiss your feet, and smooth your brow, for having saved our Mariam, and preserved her from dragging out her existence the slave of the Musúlman.'

'I then received the congratulations and kind speeches of her brothers and uncle, who all invited me to their village in so pressing a manner, that, unable to resist, and propelled by my anxiety to see Mariam, I accepted their offer, and we forthwith proceeded in a body.

As we were winding down the side of

one of the mountains, Mariam's village, for such I shall call it, was pointed out to me, situated among trees, snugly seated in a warm nook, protected from every wind but the east, which here coming from the *Kulzum*, or the Caspian sea, is delightfully cool and serene. Beyond was the Pembaki river, winding its way through a beautiful valley, diversified by rich vegetation; and at a greater distance we could just discern the church of Kara Klisseh, or the Black Monastery, the first station of the Russians on this part of their frontier, and situated on a dark and precipitous rock, rising conspicuous among the verdure of the surrounding scenery.

'When near the village we discovered that all its inhabitants, particularly the women and children, had been watching our steps down the slope, anxious to know whether Mariam had been retaken; and when they saw her safe, there was no end to their expressions of joy. The story of her flight and of her rescue was soon told, and carried

from one mouth to another with such rapidity and with such additional circumstances, that at length it came out that she had been carried away by a giant, who had an iron head, claws and feet of steel, and scales on his back, mounted upon a beast that tore up the ground at every bound, and made noises in its rapid course over the hills like the discharges of artillery. They added to this, that of a sudden an angel, in the shape of a ploughboy, descended from the top of a high mountain in a cloud, and as he wielded a sword of fire in his hand, it frightened the horse, threw Mariam to the ground, and reduced the giant and his steed to ashes: for when she recovered from her fright, they were no longer to be seen. I was pointed out as the illustrious ploughboy, and immediately the attention of the whole village was turned towards me; but, unfortunately, when about receiving nearly divine honours, a youth, whom I had frequently met tending cattle in the mountains, recognised me, and said,

'He is no angel—he is Yûsûf, the son of Coja Petros, of Gavmishlû;' and thus I was reduced to my mortality once more. However I was treated with the greatest distinction by every body, and Mariam's relations could not sufficiently testify their gratitude for the service I had rendered. But, all this time, love was making deep inroads in my heart. I no longer saw Mariam unveiled, that happy moment of my life had gone by; but it had put the seal to my future fate. 'No,' said I to myself, 'nothing shall separate me from that beautiful maid; our destinies forthwith are one; Heaven has miraculously brought us together, and nothing but the decrees of Providence shall disunite us, even though to gain her I should be obliged to adopt the violence of the Persian, and carry her away by force.' We met now and then, Mariam and I; and although our words were few, yet our eyes said much, and I knew that my passion was returned. Oh, how I longed to have met and engaged another,

ay, twenty more Persians, to prove my love! but I recollected that I was nothing but a poor Armenian, belonging to a degraded and despised nation, and that the greatest feat which I could ever expect to perform would be to keep the wolf from my father's flocks, or to drive the marauder from our fields.

'I remained the whole of that eventful day at Geuklû (the name of the village), where the promised lamb was killed, and a large caldron of rice boiled. I returned on the following day to my parents, who had been alarmed at my absence, and who listened to the history of my adventures with all the earnestness and interest that I could wish.

'I was so entirely absorbed by my love, that I could think of nothing else; therefore I determined to inform them of the situation of my affections. 'I am of an age now,' said I to them, 'to think and act for myself. Thanks to God, and to you, I have strong arms, and can work for my bread;

I wish to marry, and Providence has prepared the way for me.'

'I then requested them forthwith to demand Mariam from her parents, in order that I might make her my wife; and finished by kissing my father's hand, and embracing my mother.

'They said in answer, 'That marriage was a serious consideration in these difficult times, and that the family was now too poor to incur the expense of a wedding. It was necessary to buy clothes, a ring, candles, sweetmeats, a crimson veil, bed and bed-covering, to pay the singers and musicians, and to make a feast; and where was money to be found to meet all this?'

'I said, ''Tis true that money is wanted, and that no marriage can take place without it, both for the honour of our family, and for the purpose of showing my love to my intended; but I can borrow; I have friends both at Erivan and at the Three Churches; and I think I could borrow enough from the one and the other to pay

the expenses of my wedding; and as for repayment, I will work so laboriously, and live so frugally, that little by little I shall pay off my debt. Besides, I can become the servant of a merchant, who would give me a share in his adventures; and one journey to Constantinople or to Astrachan would yield me enough profit to repay every one with interest.'

'In short, I said so much, that at length they were persuaded to make the necessary overtures to the parents of Mariam; and it was fixed, that in the course of a few days my father, my uncle the priest, and one of the elders of the village, should proceed to Geuklû, and ask her in marriage for me. In the mean while, I myself had been there almost every day, upon one pretext or another, and I had had several opportunities of informing her of my intentions, in order that she and her family might not be taken unawares.

'My father and his colleagues were very well received by the parents of my intended. Having talked over the matter, and seizing

this opportunity of drinking some more than usual glasses of arrack, they agreed that we should be united as soon as the marriage-articles should have been agreed upon, and the forms of the *nâm zed* (the ceremony of betrothing) should have been gone through.

'Three days after this, my mother, accompanied by two old women of our village, by my uncle the priest, and me, proceeded to Genklû for the purposes of the nâm zed, and settling the terms of the marriage. They were received with more ceremony than my father and his colleagues had been, and the women of the other party having met ours, negotiations were opened.

'My mother offered, on my part, that I should give of clothes to my bride two full suits, consisting of two shifts, one of crimson silk, the other of blue cotton; two pair of trowsers, one of silk, the other of striped cotton; two *jubbehs*, or robes, fitting tight to the body, of chintz; two veils, one of white cotton, the other of chequered blue; two pair of slippers, one of green shagreen skin and high heels, the other of brown

leather, with flat bone heels and shod with iron: and I was also to add a printed muslin handkerchief, and a set of bandages and kerchiefs for the head. She moreover offered fifty piastres in silver coin for minor expenses; and a chain for the neck, from which there should be suspended one gold tomaun of Persia.

'After some little consultation among the friends of my wife, this was agreed upon; but one of the old women, who had been a servant in a Persian family, started a demand which gave rise to some discussion; it was, that I ought to give something for *sheer baha*, or milk money, as is the custom throughout Persia. Our party said this was not usual among the Armenians; the adverse party contended it was; in short, words were running high, when I requested my mother not to make any difficulty, but to offer ten piastres more; which being agreed upon, the whole was amicably adjusted to the satisfaction of both parties.

'This had taken place among the women alone. I was then called in, with my uncle, to go through the ceremony, and strict injunctions were made me not to laugh, nor even to smile, while it lasted; for ill luck would attend the marriage if any thing so indecorous took place at the first interview.

'I found my mother seated on the ground, flanked by her two old women, opposite to my bride's mother, supported by hers. Mariam entered at the same moment, and my mother then presented her with a ring (a brass one, alas!) from me, which she put on her finger, and then wine was administered to the priest; of which, when he had taken a copious draught, it was announced that we were betrothed man and wife, and we received the congratulations of all those around us. I was delighted, although prohibited from communicating with my intended; but went about kissing every body, and so many benedictions were

showered upon us, that perhaps no couple ever was so much blessed, by good wishes at least, as we were.

'My mother and her party having returned to our village, I proceeded to make the preparations for my wedding with a light heart, regardless of any event which might intervene to destroy it. When we came to discuss the money it was likely to cost, and the means of obtaining it, I was agreeably surprised to see my father walk into the room where the family was assembled, with a bag in his hand. 'Here,' said he, 'here is money. After all, the ked khoda of Gavmishlû can provide for his son as well as the best he in the country. Here, Yûsûf,' said he to me, 'take these ten tomauns, my son, and lay them out in the purchase of your wife's clothes.'

'Upon which I knelt down, kissed his hand, and craved his blessing.

'My uncle, the priest, warmed by this generosity, said, 'And here, nephew,—the church is poor indeed, and its ministers

poorer,—but here—take these twenty silver abassis, and expend them in tapers for your wedding. Others of those seated in the assembly also gave me something; by which means, without being reduced to the necessity of borrowing, I found my purse sufficiently well supplied to enable me to make my purchases at once. I expressed my thanks to my benefactors; and never before having had so much money in my possession, I scarcely knew what countenance to keep. However, my impatience knew no bounds; I was anxious to be already on my road to Erivan, where the clothes were to be bought; for there was no place nearer than that city in which a bazar was to be found. But as I was ignorant of the arts of buying, and particularly ill versed in women's dresses, it was decided that my mother should accompany me mounted on our ass, whilst I followed on foot. She had an Armenian friend at Erivan, who would take us in for a night or two; and as for sleeping on the road, we

could take up our abode in the tents of the wandering tribes, whose duties bind them to hospitality towards the stranger.

'We departed, she on the ass, I with my sword by my side, and my gun on my shoulder; and followed by half the village, invoking good luck for us.

'Having reached the heights of Aberan, we discovered an immense camp of white tents; one of which, belonging to the chief, was of a magnificent size. A horseman whom we met informed us that the Serdar of Erivan was encamped there with a considerable body of cavalry; and it was supposed posted there to watch the motions of the Russians and Georgians, who, it was expected, were likely soon to move their forces forwards to the attack of Persia.

'This intelligence gave us considerable alarm. My mother was for returning home, and for putting off the wedding. Too much in love to hearken to such a proposal, I urged her to travel more expeditiously, that we might be back the sooner. We

proceeded so far on the first day, that I could see the smoke of Erivan in the distance. We passed the night under a projecting rock, with the majestic mountain of Arrarat in full view; and did not fail to cross ourselves when we first came in view of it, and of recommending ourselves to St. Gregorio, when we composed ourselves to sleep. The wandering tribes had gone too far out of our track for our purpose, therefore we did not think of seeking their protection; but, refreshed with our night's rest, we resumed our journey early in the morning, and reached Erivan in safety.

'My mother was received by her friend with kindness; and the day after our arrival, they went to the bazar to make purchases of the wedding-clothes, whilst I roamed about, gaping at every thing, and listening to the speeches of those who were gathered together on the market-place. Various were the rumours concerning the operations of the Serdar against the enemy. It was evident that some movement was likely soon to

take place, and an attack of an extraordinary nature to be made; for the people at the arsenal, and powder works, had been more than usually employed in making ready certain instruments* of destruction, before unknown in Persia, and set on foot by Russian deserters themselves. I was so entirely taken up by my own affairs, and by the happiness in store for me, that this sort of intelligence passed by me totally unheeded. It just struck me, that we might endeavour to secure the protection of the Serdar, through our chief at the Three Churches, in case our village and its territory became the theatre of war; but when I reflected upon the length of time it would take to make such a deviation from our road, I abandoned the idea, and, in my impatience, trusted to my own sword and musket as sufficient protection against all invaders.

'My mother and I returned to our village

* It is supposed that the instruments here alluded to were hand-grenades.

by the same road we came, but not with quite so much speed; for the ass was laden with our purchases, and, in addition to my arms, I also carried a considerable share of the burthen. The Serdar's camp was still in the same place, and we passed on without hinderance or any occurrence worth relating, until we reached the high ground that overlooks Gavmishlû.

'The sight of a tent first struck my mother, and she stopped.

'' What is that, Yusûf?' she cried out to me: 'see, there is a tent.'

'I, who had no thoughts in my head but those that concerned my wedding, answered, 'Yes, I see; perhaps they are making preparations for an entertainment for us.'

'' My husband's beard with your entertainment!' exclaimed she; 'what are become of your wits? Either Russians or Persians are there, as sure as I am a Christian; and in either case it is bad for us.'

'We pushed on towards our dwelling with the greatest anxiety; and, as we ap-

proached it, found that my mother had judged right. The village had been just occupied by a small detachment of Russian infantry, composed of fifty men, commanded by a *penjah bashi*, or a head of fifty, who, it seems, formed the advanced posts of an army quartered at a day's distance from us. Every house in the village had been obliged to lodge a certain number of men, and ours, as the best, and belonging to the chief, was taken up by the captain.

'You may conceive our consternation on finding this state of things; and, in particular, how wretched I was from the apprehension that my wedding must be put off to an indefinite time, when perhaps ruin would have overwhelmed us, and left us naked and destitute fugitives. Oh! the idea was too overwhelming, and I hastened to give vent to my feelings to my friends at Geuklû, who perhaps might afford me some consolation. Their village being considerably out of the track of the invaders, no troops had yet made their appearance

amongst them; but when they heard what was passing on our side of the country, they immediately became partakers of all our fears. I saw Mariam, dear child of nature! The customs of our country did not permit us to converse openly; but love is fertile in expedients, and we managed to pour out eternal vows of constancy, and to swear upon the holy cross of our faith, that, happen what might, we would ever be united.

'These interviews happened frequently, and I became almost mad with rage and disappointment that we could not marry. It was evident that some terrible catastrophe must take place soon,—the armies might meet from day to day, and then what would become of the rejoicings of our wedding-day! To undertake the performance of a ceremony of such importance, under these circumstances, would only be mocking Providence, and preparing for ourselves a futurity of misfortune. However, I was too much in love, and too impatient, not to

have married under any circumstances, therefore I only endured what I could not well resist.

'However, a fortnight had elapsed since our return, and nothing had happened. We were upon excellent terms with our guests the Russians, and as they were quiet and inoffensive, infinitely more so than Persians would have been under similar circumstances, we became very intimate. They were Christians as well as we; they made the sign of the cross; prayed at our church; eat pork and drank wine; all circumstances producing great sympathy of feeling, and strengthening the bonds of friendship between us. Their captain was a young man of great worth, and of such unpresuming manners that he gave universal satisfaction. He kept the strictest discipline among his troops, and was himself the soberest of mankind. He was anxious to gain information concerning our manners and customs, and encouraged us to converse with him upon every thing that interested our family. This brought on

a full exposition of our situation in regard to my wedding, to which he listened with a degree of interest so great, as to make him my friend for life.

'He said, 'But why should it not take place now? There is nothing to hinder it: we are here to protect you, and whatever we can give or lend, I promise that I will procure. The Persians do not show the least sign of moving, and our army must wait for reinforcements from Teflis before it can advance further; therefore you will have all the necessary time to perform your ceremonies in quiet and happiness, and perhaps with more splendour than if we had not been here.'

'He, moreover, promised to make a present to the bride of some Georgian gold lace, and to lend me his horse, a fine Karadaghi, which I might mount on the occasion. He said so much, that he at length persuaded mine and my bride's relations not to defer the ceremony, and a day was fixed. Had any other man pressed the business so

much, and appeared so personally interested in it, I should probably have been suspicious of the purity of his intentions, and certain feelings of jealousy might have arisen; but the captain was so ugly, so hideously ugly, so opposite to what passes for beauty amongst us, that I could have no fear concerning Mariam on his account; for if she could notice him, she could with the same facility become enamoured of an ape. His face was composed of a white leprous skin, with a head covered by hair, or rather quills, thrown about in a variety of stiff lines, of the colour of straw; his eyes were round holes scooped deep in their sockets, and situated behind small hillocks of cheek-bones; his nose was marked by a little bit of flesh, under which were pierced two holes as if with an awl, and his chin as lucid as glass, did not show the smallest appearance of hair. A little down grew upon his upper lip, which for length and prominence quite outdid its fellow; and this indication of a man was as carefully kept greased and

blacked as a pair of immense boots in which his legs were always cased.

'' No,' said I, to myself, ' Mariam would sooner love her Persian giant than this creature; and when she comes to compare him to her intended (looking over myself at the same time with some complacency), I flatter myself that I may lay my jealous fears aside.'

' And thus it was settled that I should wed. The evening before the wedding-day, the clothes and other articles, placed in trays borne upon men's heads, and preceded by singers and musicians (of which some are to be found in every village), were sent to my bride. My band consisted of a man who played on the *zourna*, or hautbois, a performer on the tambourine, and two who sang. As a mark of additional splendour, our Russian friends lent us a drum, the beating of which by one of our shepherd boys produced great effect all over the country. I followed my present a few hours after, for the purpose of receiving the one

which my bride, according to custom, was to make me; consisting of a pair of brass mounted pistols, made in the Caucasus, which had belonged to a great uncle of hers, who had been a soldier in the troops of the *Wali* of Georgia, before the Russians had got possession of that country.

'On the following day, the day of my long expected happiness, I and all my family arose betimes in the morning. The weather was serene but sultry; there had been a tendency to storm for several days before, and heavy clouds stood in threatening attitudes with their white heads in the horizon. But nature was beautiful, and refreshed by a shower that had fallen in the night. My friend, the captain, lent me his horse, which I caparisoned and ornamented as well as I could on the occasion. I myself put on a new suit of clothes from head to foot, and with the addition of many silver-studded belts, cortouche-boxes, daggers, and other appendages fastened about me, and which had been lent me by a Georgian in the

service of the Russians, I was told; and I believe it, that I made a very handsome appearance. Accompanied by my male relations, the Russian captain, and as many of his men as could be spared in order to create a crowd, we proceeded to Geuklû, and approaching it, marshalled ourselves in procession, preceded by music, songs, and shouts. We alighted at my bride's house, where we partook of refreshments, and received the congratulations of all the village; and then, when every thing was prepared for our return to Gavmishlû, where my uncle was to perform the ceremony, we mounted again. My bride, covered by a crimson veil from head to foot, which flowed over a flat platter placed on her crown, was mounted on her father's steed, led on either side by her brothers. It is the custom for the bridegroom to hold a sash or girdle by his right hand, which is held at the other end by the bride, on their way to the church, and this we did. All our friends, our relations, all the youth of the villages, some on foot, some on asses,

others on horses, accompanied the procession, making shouts, and manifesting their joy by all sorts of games and jokes during the whole course of the march. When at length we had reached a small rising ground overlooking my village the procession stopped, and every one who had a part to act in the ceremony received a taper, which was forthwith lighted. The procession then moved on with slow and measured steps, headed by my uncle, who, assisted by my other uncle from the Three Churches, sang psalms as they walked forwards, amidst all the noise of the surrounding lookers on. The Russian captain had had the attention to dress his men up on the occasion, and they marched to the church with us, adding much to the dignity of the scene.

'We at length alighted at the door of the church, and, still holding each end of the girdle, my bride and I walked to the foot of the altar, which, notwithstanding our humble condition, had been ornamented with more than ordinary brilliancy by flowers,

ribands, and looking-glasses. My forehead was then placed against Mariam's in a sort of butting attitude, and the Bible opened and laid upon our heads, whilst her hand was given into mine. The priest then asked, if we agreed to take each other for husband and wife; and after we had made an inclination of our heads as marking our consent, and a suitable proportion of prayers had been read and chanted, the ceremony was at an end, and notified to all the world by the shouts of the multitude, and by the redoubled sounds of our drums, flutes, and tambours.

'Daylight by this time had entirely disappeared, and the weather, which had threatened a storm, now became very lowering. The sky was darkened, rain fell, and distant thunders were heard. This circumstance put an end to the entertainment given by my father earlier than it otherwise would have done; and when our guests had retired, the hour at length arrived which was to make me the happiest of men.

'Oh, shall I stop here to recollect all the horrors of that night—or shall I pass on, and not distress you by relating them? You must conceive my bride lovely as the morning star, innocent as an angel, and attached to me by the purest love; and you may imagine what I felt at that moment,—I who had looked upon our union as impossible, and had thought of my awaiting happiness as a bright spot in my existence, to which I expected never to attain.

'But in order to give a right impression of the scene which I am about to describe, you must know that the villages in Georgia, and in our part of Armenia, are built partly under ground, and thus a stranger finds himself walking on the roof of a house when he thinks that he is on plain ground, the greatest part of them being lighted by apertures at the top. Such was the house in which my family lived, and in which my wedding was celebrated. My nuptial chamber had one of these apertures, which had been closed on the occasion, and was situated

with its door leading at once into the open air.

'It is the custom among the Armenians for the bridegroom to retire first. His shoes and stockings are then taken off by his wife; and, before she resigns her veil, has the task of extinguishing the light. The storm had just broke,—thunders were rolling over our heads,—the lightning flashed,—torrents of rain were pouring down with fearful noise,—there seemed to be a general commotion of the elements, when my Mariam, unveiling herself, extinguished the lamp. She had scarcely laid herself down, when we heard an unusual violent noise at the aperture in the ceiling: sounds of men's voices were mingled with the crash of the thunder; trampling of horses was also distinctly heard; and presently we were alarmed by a heavy noise of something having fallen in our room and near our bed, accompanied by a glare and a smell of sulphur.

"'Tis a thunderbolt, by all that is sacred!

Oh heaven protect us!' cried I. 'Fly, my soul, my wife, escape!'"

'She had just time to snatch up her veil, and to get without the door, when an explosion took place in the very room, so awful, so tremendous, that I immediately thought myself transported to the regions of the damned. I fell senseless, amidst the wreck of falling stones, plaster, and furniture. All I can recollect is, that an immense blaze of light was succeeded by an overpowering sulphureous smell,—then a dead silence.

'I lay there for some time, unconscious of what was passing; but by degrees came to myself, and when I found that I could move my limbs, and that nothing about my person was materially hurt, I began to consider how I had got there. As for my wedding, that appeared to me a dream: all I heard about me now was the firing of muskets, loud and frequent explosions, cries and shouts of men,—of men wounded and in pain,—of men attacking and putting

others to death,—the tramplings of horses, the clashing of arms. 'What, in the name of Heaven, can all this be?' said I. I still thought myself transported into another planet, when the shriek of a woman struck my ear. 'It is Mariam! It is she, by all that is sacred! Where, where, shall I seek her?' I was roused: I disencumbered myself of the weight of rubbish that had fallen upon me, and, once upon my legs again, I sallied forth in search of her. The scene which presented itself was more terrible than language can express; for the first object which struck my sight was a Persian rushing by me, with a drawn sword in one hand, and a human head, dripping with blood, in another. The blackness of the night was lighted up at rapid intervals by vivid flashes of lightning, which, quick as the eye could glance, now discovered the hideous tragedy that was then acting, and now threw it again into darkness, leaving the imagination to fill up the rest. By one flash, I saw Persians, with uplifted swords,

attacking defenceless Russians, rushing from their beds: by another, the poor villagers were discovered flying from their smoking cottages in utter dismay. Then an immense explosion took place, which shook every thing around. The village cattle, loosened from their confinements, ran about in wild confusion, and mixed themselves with the horrors of the night: in short, my words fall short of any description that could be made of this awful scene of devastation; and I must bless the mercy of that Almighty hand which hath spared me in the destruction that surrounded me.

'I knew not where to turn myself to seek for my wife. I had heard her shrieks; and the shivering of despair came over me, when I thought it might have been her death groans which had struck my ears. I threw myself into the midst of the carnage, and, armed with a firebrand, snatched from my burning nuptial chamber, I made my way through the combatants, more like a maniac at the height of his frenzy, than a

bridegroom on his wedding-night. Getting into the skirts of the village again, I thought I heard the shrieks of my beloved. I ran towards the direction, and a flash of lightning, that glanced over the adjoining hill, showed me two horsemen making off with a woman, whose white veil was conspicuously seen, mounted behind one of them. Heedless of every thing but my wife, I followed them with the swiftness of a mountain goat; but as the storm subsided, the lightning flashed no more, and I was left in utter darkness at the top of the hill, not knowing which path to take, and whether to proceed or not. I was almost naked. I had been severely bruised. My feet, otherwise accustomed to the naked ground, had become quite lacerated by the pursuit I had undertaken; and altogether, I was so worn with grief, so broken-hearted, that I laid myself down on the wet earth in a state of desperation that was succeeded by a torpor of all my senses. Here I lay until the first rays of the morning glared in my eyes, and

brought me gradually to a sense of my situation.

"'What has happened?' said I: 'Where am I? How came I here? Either the dæmons and wicked angels of another world have been at work this night, or else I am most grossly abused. To see that glorious orb rising in that clear unclouded sky; to mark the soothing serenity of nature, the morning freshness, the song of the birds, the lowing of yon cattle, and the quiet and seclusion of my yonder paternal village, I ought to suppose that the images of horror, of indescribable horror, now floating in my mind, must be those of a diseased imagination. Is it possible that in this secluded spot, under this lovely sky, in the midst of these bounteous gifts of nature, I could have seen man murdering his fellow-creature, the blazing cottage, the mangled corse, the bleeding head;—and, O cruel, O killing thought, that I should have been bereft of my dear, my innocent wife?' and then, then only, was I

restored to a full possession of every occurrence that had taken place; and tears which before had refused to flow now came to my assistance, and relieved my burning temples and my almost suffocating bosom. I got up, and walked slowly to the village. All was hushed into quiet; a slight smoke was here and there to be seen; stray cattle were grazing on the outskirts; strangers on horseback seemed to be busily employed in preparations of some kind or other, and the wretched peasantry were seen huddled together in groups, scarcely awake from the suddenness of the destruction which had visited them, and uncertain of the fate which might still be in reserve. As for me, the loss which I had already sustained made me expect every other attendant misfortune. I had made my mind up to find my relations dead, to see the total ruin of our house, and to know that I was a solitary outcast on the face of the world, without a wife, without a home, without parents, without a friend. But no, imagination had worked up the

picture too highly; for one of the first persons I met on entering our village was my poor mother, who, when she saw me, recollecting all the trouble she had been at to secure my happiness, fell on my neck, and shed a torrent of tears. When her first grief had subsided, she told me that my father had suffered much from bruises, and from a blow received on the head; but that the rest of the family were well; that our house had been considerably injured, many of our things pillaged; and that my nuptial room, in particular, had been almost totally destroyed. She informed me that the good Russian captain had been the first to fall a sacrifice to the attack of the Persians; for almost immediately after the explosion in my room, he had rushed out to see what had happened, when two Persians seized him, one of whom at once decapitated him: this was the head that I saw brandished before me, when first I sallied forth. She then took me to a place of shelter, and put on me what clothes could be found.

'The Persians, having completed their

deeds of horror, had retired from the scene of action, leaving to our unfortunate villagers the melancholy task of burying the dead bodies of thirty wretched Russians, who had fallen victims to their treacherous attack, and whose heads they had carried off with them as trophies.

'After I had visited my father, and left my home in as comfortable a situation as I could, under the existing circumstances, I determined instantly to set out in pursuit of my wife. It was evident that she had been carried away by some of those who had attacked our village, and that she must have been taken to Erivan, as the nearest market for slaves, for such was no doubt the purpose for which she had been seized. My sword, pistols, and gun, which had formed part of the ornamental furniture of my bridal chamber, were found buried in its ruins, and with these for my protection, and with some pieces of silver in my purse, I bid adieu to Gavmishlû, making a vow never to return until I had found my Mariam.'

'I travelled with hurried steps, taking

the shortest cuts over the mountains to Erivan, and as I crossed a branch of the high road I met two horsemen, well mounted and equipped, who stopped me, and asked whither I was going, and upon what errand.

'I did not hesitate to tell them my wretched tale, hoping they might give me some hint which might throw light upon the fate of my wife. This they did indeed, but in a manner so cruel, that their words awakened the most horrid suspicions, and almost to a certainty convinced me that my poor innocent, my hitherto unspotted, though wedded wife, had fallen into the power of a most licentious tyrant.

'"Is it possible,' said I, when they had related to me the horrid expedients to which their chief, the Serdar, (for it was to two of his body-guard that I was talking) had recourse, for the accomplishment of his wickedness—'is it possible that selfishness can be carried to such an extreme, that vice can have reached to such a pitch in the heart of man? Women, by you Mussulmans, I

know are treated as mere accessaries to pleasure; but, after all, they are God's creatures, not made for the Serdar alone, as he seems to think, but given to us to be our help, our comfort, and our companions through life.'

'My hearers only laughed at my sentiments, and tauntingly assured me, that, if I was seeking one who had got into the Serdar's harem, my labour would be in vain, and that I might just take the trouble to return whence I came.

'Little heeding what they said, I hastened my steps, without knowing why or wherefore; but impelled by a sort of feeling, that it could not be in the wisdom of the Almighty to heap such a load of misfortune upon a wretched sinner like me, without at length giving some counterbalancing reward, or some consolation which it is ever in His power to bestow.

'I was now near the camp at Aberan, where I knew the Serdar in person was settled, and, hoping to hear some favourable intelligence, I made towards it. It was

greatly agitated by the arrival of the detachment of Persians who had attacked our village, and were giving proofs of the success of their enterprise, by exhibiting the Russian heads which they had brought away, and which were laid in several heaps before the tent of the chief. One might have supposed that a great and signal victory had been achieved, such were the rejoicings and boastings that took place at the sight. The horrid objects were forthwith salted, and sent off in great parade and ceremony to the Shah of Persia, who never will believe that a victory is gained until he sees these palpable proofs of it. However, in the midst of all this joy, a courier was seen arriving in great haste from the Russian frontier, whose intelligence produced a change of scene. He announced that the Russian army, having heard of the late attack upon their outpost at Gavmishlû, was now in full march against the Serdar, and coming on so rapidly, that he must expect to be attacked even before night close. The scene that ensued

defies all description. The whole camp was ordered to be struck, and an immediate retreat was commanded. Tents falling, mules loading, men screaming; horses, camels, men, cannon, all were in motion at one time; and before two hours had elapsed, the whole had disappeared, and the army was on its march for Erivan.

'I had in the meanwhile received no account of my lost Mariam; and it was plain that, if in the power of the Serdar, she was within the walls of his seraglio at Erivan. Thither then I bent my steps, hoping that in this great confusion something might turn up for my advantage.

'Upon my arrival there, I posted myself at the bridge over the Zengui, from whence I had a full survey of that part of the Serdar's palace which contains his women; and as the troops were crossing it at the same time in constant succession, I was unnoticed, and passed for one of the camp followers. The building is situated upon the brink of a precipice of dark rock, at the foot of which

flows the Zengui, a clear and rapid stream, foaming through a rocky bed, the stony projections of which form white eddies, and increase the rush of its waters. A bridge of three arches is here thrown over it, and forms part of the high road leading to Georgia and Turkey. The principal saloon of the palace, in a corner of which the Serdar is usually seated, opens with a large casement on the river, and overlooks the rugged scenery. At some distance on the same surface of building are the windows of the women's apartments, distinguished by their lattices, and by other contrivances of jealousy. However, I observed they were not so well secured, but that objects passing and repassing the bridge might well be seen from them; and I imagined that if Mariam was a prisoner there, she might perchance make me out as I stood below. 'But if she did, what then?' said I to myself in despair: 'seeing me there would only add to her torture, and to my desperation.' To escape from such a height

appeared impossible, for a fall would be instant death; and excepting a willow tree, which grew out of the rock immediately under one of the windows, there was nothing to break the descent. However, having remained in one spot so long in meditation, I feared to be observed; and left my post for the present, determining to return to it at the close of day, and indeed at every hour when I could appear without suspicion.

'I had been watching the windows of the seraglio in this manner for more than a fortnight, and had not ceased to parade up and down the bridge at least three times every day, when one evening, as the day was about to close, I saw the lattice of the window over the willow tree open, and a female looking out of it. I watched her with breathless suspense. She appeared to recognise me. I extended my hand; she stretched forth hers. 'It is she!' said I; 'yes, it must be her! It is my Mariam!' Upon which, without a moment's hesitation,

without thinking of the consequences, I plunged into the river, and having waded through it, stood at the foot of the precipice immediately under my beloved wife. She stretched her arms several times towards me, as if she would have thrown herself out. I almost screamed with apprehension; and yet the hope of pressing her tó my heart made me half regret that she had not done so. We stood there looking wistfully at each other, fearing to speak, yet longing to do so. At length, she shut the lattice suddenly, and left me in an attitude and in all the horrors of suspense. I kept my post for some time without seeing any thing more of her, when again suddenly the lattice opened, and she appeared, but with looks that spoke intense agitation. I scarcely could tell what was about to happen, but waited in dreadful anxiety, until I saw her lean forward, retreat, lean forward again—then more and more, until, by a sudden effort, I beheld her fair form in the air, falling down the giddy height. My legs refused to perform their

office, my eyes were obscured by a swimming, and I should have probably sunk under the intenseness of my feelings, when I saw her half suspended, half falling, from a branch of the willow tree. I bounded up, and in an instant had mounted the tree, and had clasped her senseless in my arms. I seemed to be impelled by new vigour and strength; to reach the ground, to recross the river, to fly with my precious burthen from the inhabited outskirts into the open country, appeared but the business of a second. I was perfectly drunk with the thousand feelings which agitated me; and although I acted like one bereft of his senses, yet every thing I did was precisely that which I ought to have done. Nature guided me: the animal acting only from instinct would have done like me. I had saved that which was most precious to me in this world.

'When I had worn out my first efforts of strength, and had felt that my hitherto senseless burthen showed some symptoms of life, I stopped, and placed her quietly on

the ground behind some broken walls. She was terribly bruised, although no bone had been broken. The branches of the tree, upon which she had alighted, had wounded her deeply in several places, and the blood had flowed very copiously. But she was alive; she breathed; she opened her eyes, and at length pronounced my name. I was almost crazy with joy, and embraced her with a fervour that amounted to madness. When she had reposed herself a little, I snatched her up again, and proceeded onwards with all the haste imaginable, in the determination to strike at once into the mountains; but recollecting that I had the river of Ashtarek to cross, and that with her in my arms it would be impossible to do so except by the bridge, I at once directed my steps thither.

'We were reposing at the foot of the bridge, when I heard the footsteps of your horses. Although nearly exhausted with my previous exertions, I still had strength enough left to clamber up the bank, and

take refuge in the ruined church, where you first discovered us; and there I watched your motions with the greatest anxiety, concluding that you were a party sent in pursuit of us by the Serdar. Need I say after this, that if you will protect us, and permit us to seek our home, you will receive the overflowing gratitude of two thankful hearts, and the blessings of many now wretched people, who by our return will be made supremely happy? Whoever you are, upon whatever errand you may be sent, you cannot have lost the feelings of a man. God will repay your kindness a thousand times; and although we are not of your faith and nation, still we have prayers to put up at the Throne of Grace, which must be received when they are employed in so good a cause.'

CHAPTER XII.

Sequel of the foregoing history, and of the resolution which Hajji Baba takes in consequence.

The Armenian youth here finished his narrative, and left me in astonishment and admiration at all he had related. With my permission he then quitted me to visit his wife, and promised to return immediately with the report of her present state, and how she felt after her repose.

'He surely cannot have been inventing lies to my face all this time,' said I when left to myself, 'for a bleeding woman is here in evidence to corroborate what he has advanced; but then should I permit him to proceed, and the Serdar was to hear that I had done so, what would become of me? I should certainly lose my place, and perhaps my ears. No; compassion does not suit me; for if it did, I ought not to remain

a Nasakchi. I will stick to what the sage Locman, I believe, once said on this occasion, which runs something to this purpose:—'If you are a tiger, be one altogether; for then the other beasts will know what to trust to: but if you wear a tiger's skin, and long ears are discovered to be concealed therein, they will then treat you even worse than if you walked about in your own true character, an undisguised ass.'"

I kept turning over in my mind whether I should release him or not; and was fluctuating in great perplexity between the ass and the tiger, when Yûsûf returned. He told me that his Mariam was considerably refreshed by repose; but, weak from loss of blood, and stiff by the violence of the contusions which she had received (in particular, one upon her leg, which was of consequence), it would be impossible for her to move for several days; 'except indeed we were pursued by the Serdar,' added he, 'when I believe nothing but force could

hinder us from proceeding.' He said that not until now had she found strength enough to relate her own adventures from the time she had left him at Gavmishlû.

It appears, that the instant she had darted from the nuptial chamber, only covered by her veil, she had been seized by a Persian, who, discovering by the glare of the lightning that she was young and handsome, ran off with her to some distance, and there detained her, until, with the assistance of another, she was mounted on a horse and taken forcibly away; that these two men carried her straight to the camp at Aberan, and offered her for sale to the Serdar; who having agreed to take her, ordered her to be conducted to his seraglio at Erivan, and there put into service; that the horrid plight in which she stood, when exhibited to the Serdar, her disfigured looks, and her weak and drooping state, made her hope that she would remain unnoticed and neglected; particularly when she heard what was his character, and to what extent he carried his

cruelties on the unfortunate victims of his selfishness. Mariam alluding to herself, then said, 'Hoping, by always talking of myself as a married woman, that I should meet with more respect in the house of a Mussulman, than if I were otherwise; I never lost an opportunity of putting my husband's name forward, and this succeeded—for little or no notice was taken of me, and I was confounded with the other slaves, and performed the different tasks of servitude which were set me. But, unfortunately, I did not long keep my own counsel; I confided my story to a Persian woman, who pretended to be my friend; hoping by that means to soften her heart so much as to induce her to help me in regaining my freedom; but she proved treacherous; she made a merit of relating it to the Serdar, who immediately forced me to confirm her words with my own lips, and then the extent of my imprudence became manifest. He announced his intention to avail himself of my situation, and ordered me to prepare for

receiving him. Conceive then what were the horrors of my position. I turned over in my mind every means of escape, but all avenues to it were shut. I had never before thought of looking over the precipice upon which the windows of our prison opened; but now I seriously thought of precipitating myself, rather than submit to the tyrant. But a few hours after I had had the blessing to discover you on the bridge, I had been ordered to hold myself in readiness to receive him; and it was then that I had positively determined in my own mind to throw myself headlong out, either once more to be joined to you, or to die in the attempt. When I shut the lattices in haste, several women had just come into the room to conduct me to the hot-bath previously to being dressed; and when I had made some excuse for delaying it, and had sent them out of the room, it was then that I opened the lattice a second time, and put my resolution into practice.'

Yûsûf having finished the recital of his and his wife's adventures, was very anxious

to know what part I would take, and earnestly entreated me to befriend him by my advice and assistance.

The morning was far spent. My men were already mounted, and ready to proceed on our reconnoitring expedition, and my horse was waiting for me, when a thought struck me, which would settle every difficulty with regard to the young Armenian and his wife.

I called him to me, and said, 'After what you have related, it will be impossible to leave you at liberty. You have, by your own account, run off with a woman from the Serdar's seraglio, a crime which you perhaps do not know, in a Mussulman country, is punished with death, so sacred is the harem held in our estimation. If I were to act right, I ought not to lose a moment in sending you both back to Erivan; but that I will not do, provided you agree to join us in our present expedition, and to serve us as guide in those parts of the country with which you are best acquainted.' I then ex-

plained to him the nature of my office, and what was the object of the expedition.

'If you are zealous in our cause,' said I, 'you will then have performed a service which will entitle you to reward, and thus enable me to speak in your favour to the Serdar and to my chief, and, *Inshallah!* please God, to procure your release. In the meanwhile, your wife may remain here, in all safety, in the hands of the good folks of this village; and by the time we return, she will, I hope, have been restored to health.'

The youth, upon hearing this language, took my hand and kissed it, agreed to every thing I had said, and having girt on his arms, he was ready to attend us. I permitted him to go to his wife, to give her an account of this arrangement, and to console her, with proper assurances, that they would soon be restored to each other. He again thanked me; and, with the agility of an antelope, had already gained the summit of the first hill before we had even began to ascend it.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Armenian Yûsûf proves himself worthy of Hajji Baba's confidence.

We proceeded towards the Georgian frontier, shaping our track over unfrequented parts of the mountains, in which we were very materially assisted by Yûsûf, who appeared to be acquainted with every landmark, and who knew the directions of places with a precision that quite surprised us. He did not seem anxious to visit his own village; and, in fact, he assured me, that had he even permission so to do, he could not, because he felt himself bound by the oath which he had taken upon last quitting it, not to return, except accompanied by his wife.

The intelligence which had been brought to the Serdar of the advance of the Moscovites proved false, for we found them posted

on the banks of the Pembaki river, occupying the village of Hamamlû, and fortifying themselves in Karaklisseh. We were not far from the former place; and as we approached it, I became anxious to acquire some precise intelligence concerning the numbers and the dispositions of the enemy. A thought struck me, as I pondered over the fate of my Armenian protegé—'I will either save this youth or lose him,' thought I, 'and never was there a better opportunity than the present. He shall go to Hamamlû: if he brings me the intelligence we want, nothing can prevent me from procuring both his pardon and his wife for him—if he proves a traitor, I get rid of him, and demand a reward from the Serdar, for restoring his fugitive slave.'

I called him to me, and proposed the undertaking. Quicker than thought, he seized all the different bearings of the question, and without hesitation accepted of my proposal. He girt himself afresh, he tucked the skirts of his coats into his girdle, putting his cap

on one side, and slinging his long gun at his back, he darted down the mountain's side, and we very soon lost him amid the sloping woods.

'*Ruft ke ruft.* He is gone and doubly gone,' said the young delikhan; 'we shall never see him again.'

'And why should he not return?' said I. 'Have we not got a hostage? Armenian though he is, he will not leave his wife.'

'Yes,' said the youth, 'he is an Armenian; but he is also an Isauvi, (a Christian). The Russians too are Isauvis; and we all know, that when these infidels get together, they will rather die than return to the sons of Islam. No; were he the chaste Joseph himself, and his wife Zuleikha in person, I will bet this horse,' pointing to the beast under him, 'that we see him no more.'

'Do not coin false words, my little gentleman!' said a sturdy old cavalier, whose sun-burnt face was harrowed by a thousand wrinkles, and shaded by a shaggy beard, mustachios, and eyebrows,—'why, without

any use, do you eat dirt? The horse is the Shah's, not yours: and do you pretend to make the *bahs* (bets) upon it?'

'The Shah's property is mine, and mine is my own,' retorted the youth.

I and my party kept up this sort of desultory talk for a little while before we thought of settling ourselves, when, seeing a spot where there was much grass, we made for it, and dismounted from our horses. We dispersed ourselves here and there, each making a temporary establishment of horse-cloths and cloaks spread upon the ground, whilst our steeds, picketed among the grass, fed at pleasure. I announced my intention of passing the night here in case Yûsûf did not appear before its close; and preparatory to this, two of our best marauders set off in quest of a sheep, fowls, or any thing they could get for our evening's meal. After an hour's absence, they returned with a sheep which they had seized from a flock grazing in the neighbourhood of the river. It was soon

killed, and preparations were made for roasting it. Two stakes with hooks at the top were cut from the forest and stuck into the ground; then a long stick was passed through the animal in lieu of a spit, and placed on the hooks. A fire having been lighted, one of our men was stationed near it to turn the animal at intervals; and it was not long before it was ready for eating. By way of variety, some of the prime bits, with the fat of the tail, were cut off, spitted upon a ramrod, and thus roasted. The sheep was served up on its stake, and our party fell upon it with an intense appetite, whilst, by way of distinction, the ramrod was handed over to me for my share.

By this time the day had entirely closed in, and Yûsûf had not appeared. We then composed ourselves to sleep, leaving one or two to keep watch and to attend upon the horses. About an hour after midnight, when the moon was about going down, a distant shout was heard—presently

a second, more distinctly and nearer to us. We were immediately upon the alert, and the shouts being repeated, we could no longer doubt but that the Armenian was at hand. We then shouted in return, and not very long after we saw him appear. He was almost exhausted with fatigue, but still strong enough to be able to relate his adventures since he had left us.

He informed me, that having reached Hamamlû, he was recognized by some of the Russian soldiers who had escaped the attack of the Persians upon his village, and who immediately introduced him into the fort, and treated him very kindly. He was taken before the commanding officer, who questioned him narrowly upon the object of his visit; but the ready pretext which he advanced, of seeking his wife, answered every difficulty; besides which, the ruin of his village, the destruction of his family property, and the acquaintances which he had on the spot, furnished him with so much matter of conversation, that no

suspicion of his designs could be entertained. He was then permitted to walk about the fort, and by asking his questions with prudence, and making his own observations, was enabled to furnish me with the information I required on the strength and position of the enemy, with some very good conjectures on the nature and probability of their future operations. He then managed to slip away unperceived before the gates of the place were closed, and regained the mountains without the smallest impediment.

Having permitted Yûsûf to refresh himself with food and rest, and being now perfectly satisfied that his story was true, and that all confidence might be placed in his integrity, I ordered my party to hold themselves in readiness to return to Erivan. He was permitted to ride behind either of the horsemen when tired with walking, and in this manner, taking the shortest cuts over the mountains, we regained the village of Ashtarek. Whilst we stopped here to re-

fresh ourselves and horses, and to gain intelligence of the movements of the Serdar and the chief executioner, I permitted the youth to visit his wife. He returned beaming with joy, for he had found her almost cured of her bruises, and full of thanks for the kindness and hospitality with which she had been treated.

The Serdar and the chief executioner had moved from Erivan, and were now encamped close to the residence of the Armenian patriarch; and thither we bent our steps, accompanied by Yûsûf.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hajji Baba gives an account of his proceedings to his superiors, and shows himself a friend to the distressed.

The monastery of Etchmiazin, so called in the Armenian tongue, or Utch Klisseh, or the Three Churches, by the Turks and Persians, is situated in a large and well cultivated plain, watered by the Araxes, and several smaller streams. It stands at the foot of the high mountain of Agri Dagh, which the Christians, and in particular the Armenians, hold in great veneration, because (so Yûsûf informed me) upon its conspicuous snow-capt summit the ark of Noah rested. The monastery and church, celebrated throughout Asia for the riches which they contain, are inclosed within high walls, and secured by strong and massive gates. It is here that the

head of the Armenian church constantly resides, together with a large retinue of bishops, priests, and deacons, who form the stock which provides clergy for most of the Armenian churches in Asia. The title by which he is known in Persia is *khalifeh* or caliph, a designation which, comprising the head of the civil as well as the religious government, the Mussulmans used formerly to bestow on the sovereigns who held their sway at Bagdad and elsewhere. By the Christians he is generally known by the name of patriarch, and his church is an object of pilgrimage for the Armenians, who flock there at particular seasons in great numbers from different parts of the world.

Hither we bent our steps. We discovered the united camps of the Serdar and the chief executioner, spreading their white tents in an irregular figure all round the monastery; and before we had reached its walls, we heard that the two chiefs had taken up their abode within it, and were the guests of the caliph.

'We'll burn the fathers of these *giaours*,' (infidels) said the young delikhan, as he rode up to me in great joy at this intelligence; 'and will make up for the fatigues we have undergone, by drinking abundantly of their wine.'

'Are you a Mussulman,' said I, 'and talk of drinking wine? You yourself will become a giaour.'

'Oh, as for that,' answered he, 'the Serdar drinks wine like any Christian, and I do not see why I should not.'

As we approached the monastery, I called Yûsûf to me, and told him to be in readiness whenever he should be called for, and be prepared to confirm any oath that I might think it necessary to take for his interests. He was particularly enjoined, when he came to talk of the services he had rendered, to deviate from the truth as much as he chose, to set forth every sort of danger he had or had not incurred, and in particular to score up an account of sums expended, all for the use and advantage of

the Serdar and of the Shah's government. 'I hope at that rate,' said I to him, 'your accounts may be balanced, by having your wife restored to you; for which, after considerable difficulty, you may agree to give a receipt in full of all demands.'

Thus agreed, we passed through the heavy archway which leads into the first court of the monastery. This we found encumbered by the equipages and servants of the Serdar and the chief executioner. Here and there were strings of horses piqueted by ropes and pegs, with their grooms established in different corners among their saddles and horse furniture; and a corner was taken up by a set of mules, distinguished by the eternal jingle of their bells, and the no less eternal wranglings of their drivers.

In the second yard were the horses of the chief servants, who themselves inhabited small rooms that surrounded two sides of the court.

We alighted at the first court, and I im-

mediately inquired for the quarters of my master, the chief executioner. It was noon, and I was informed he was then with the Serdar, before whom, in all the boots, dust, and dirt of my travelling dress, I was immediately conducted.

They seemed to have entirely taken possession of the Armenian sanctuary, and to have dispossessed the Caliph of his place and authority; for they had taken up their abode in his very rooms, whilst the poor priests were skulking about with humble and downcast looks, as if fearful and ashamed of being the lawful inhabitants of their own possessions. The favourite horses of both the Persian chiefs were piqueted close to the very walls of the church, more care being taken of their comforts than of the convenience of the Armenians.

My reader is already acquainted with the person and character of the chief executioner; and, before I proceed farther, I must also make him acquainted with the Serdar. A man of a more sinister aspect

was never seen. His eyes, which, in the common expression of his countenance, were like opaque bits of glass, glared terribly whenever he became animated, and almost started out of their old shriveled sockets; and when this happened, it was always remarked that a corresponding smile broke out upon his mouth, which made the Shah's poet say, that Hassan Khan's face was like *Agri dagh*, the mountain near which he lived. When clouded at the top, and the sun shone in the plain, a storm was sure to ensue. Time had worn two deep wrinkles down his cheeks, which were not hid by a scanty beard, notwithstanding all the pains he took to make it thick; and the same enemy having despoiled him of all his teeth save one, which projected from his mouth, had produced deep cavities, that made the shaggy hairs, thinly spread over them, look like burnt stubble on the slopes of a valley. Altogether, it was difficult to say whether the goat or the tiger was most predominant; but this is most certain, that

never was the human form so nearly allied to that of the brute as in this instance. His character corresponded to his looks; for no law, human or divine, ever stood in the way of his sensuality; and when his passions were roused, he put no bounds to his violence and cruelty. But with all this, he had several qualities, which attached his followers to him. He was liberal and enterprising. He had much quickness and penetration, and acted so politically towards the Shah and his government, that he was always treated with the greatest confidence and consideration. He lived in princely magnificence; was remarkable for his hospitality, and making no mystery of his irregularity as a Mussulman, was frank and open in his demeanour, affable to his inferiors, and the very best companion to those who shared in his debaucheries. No bolder drinker of wine existed in Persia, except perhaps his present companion, the executioner, who, as long as he could indulge without incurring the Shah's displea-

sure, had ratified an eternal treaty of alliance between his mouth and every skin of wine that came within his reach.

It was before these two worshipful personages that I was introduced, followed by two or three of my principal attendants. I stood at the end of the apartment until I was spoken to.

'You are welcome,' said the chief executioner. 'Hajjî, by my soul, tell me, how many Russians have you killed? have you brought a head—let me see?'

Here the Serdar took him up, and said, 'What have you done? What Russians are on the frontier? and when shall we get at them?'

To all of which I answered, after making the usual prefatory speech, 'Yes, Agas, I have done all that was in my power to do. It was a lucky hour when we set off, for every thing that you wish to know I can explain! and it is evident that the destinies of the Serdar and of my master are much

on the rise, since so insignificant a slave as I can be of use to them.'

'Good luck is no bad thing, that's true,' said the Serdar, 'but we trust a great deal to our swords, too,'—rolling his eyes about at the same time, and smiling in the face of the chief executioner.

'Yes, yes,' said his companion, 'swords and gunpowder, spears and pistols,—those are our astrologers. It will always be a fortunate hour that will bring me within slice of an infidel's neck. As for me, I am a *kizzel bash* (a red head), and pretend to nothing else. A good horse, a sharp sword, a spear in my hand, and a large maidan (an open space) before me, with plenty of Muscovites in it,—that is all I want.'

'And what do you say to good wine too?' said the Serdar. 'I think that is as good a thing as any you have mentioned. We'll have the Caliph in, and make him give Hajjî a cup of his best. But tell us first,' addressing himself to me, 'what have

you seen and done?—where are the Russians posted?—how many of them are there?—have they any guns?—who commands them?—where are their Cossacks?—have you heard any thing of the Georgians?—where is the Russian commander-in-chief?—what are the Lesgî about?—where is the renegade Ismael Khan?—Come, tell us all: and you, Mirza, addressing himself to his scribe, write down all he says.'

Upon this I drew myself up, and, putting on a face of wisdom, I made the following speech:—

'By the soul of the Serdar! by the salt of the chief executioner! the Muscovites are nothing. In comparison to the Persians, they are mere dogs. I, who have seen with my own eyes, can tell you, that one Persian, with a spear in his hand, would kill ten of those miserable, beardless creatures.'

'Ah, you male lion!' exclaimed my master, apparently delighted with what I said, 'I always knew that you would be something.

Leave an Ispahani alone: he will always show his good sense.'

'They are but few Muscovites on the frontier. Five, six, seven, or eight hundred,—perhaps a thousand or two thousand—but certainly not more than three. They have some ten, twenty, or thirty guns; and as for the Cossacks, *pûtch and*, they are nothing. It is very inconvenient that they are to be found every where when least wanted, with those thick spears of theirs, which look more like the goad of an ox than a warlike weapon, and they kill, 'tis true; but then, they are mounted upon *yabous* (jades), which can never come up to our horses, worth thirty, forty, fifty tomauns each, and which are out of sight before they can even get theirs into a gallop.'

'Why do you waste your breath upon the Cossacks and their horses?' said the chief executioner; 'you might as well talk of monkeys mounted upon bears. Who commands the infidels?'

'They call him the *deli mayor*, or the mad major; and the reason why he is called so is, because he never will run away. Stories without number are related of him. Among others, that he has got the pocket Koran of his excellency the Serdar in his possession, which he shows to every one as a great trophy.'

'Ay, that 's true,' exclaimed the Serdar. 'These bankrupt dogs surprised me last year, when encamped not five parasangs hence, and I had only time to save myself, in my shirt and trowsers, on the back of an unsaddled horse. Of course, they pillaged my tent, and among other things stole my Koran. But I'll be even with them. I have shown them what I can do at Gavmishlû, and we still have much more to perform upon their fathers' graves. How many guns, did you say, they had?'

'Four or five, or six,' said I.

'I wrote down twenty or thirty just now,' remarked the Mirza, who was writing at the

edge of the carpet,—'which of the two is right?'

'Why do you tell us lies?' exclaimed the Serdar, his eyes becoming more animated as he spoke. 'If we find that any part of what you say be false, by the head of Ali! you will soon discover that our beards are not to be laughed at with impunity.'

'In truth, then,' said I, 'this intelligence is not of my own acquiring. The greatness of the Serdar's, and my Aga's good fortune, consists in my having fallen upon a means of getting the most perfect information through a young Armenian, who risked his life for us, upon my making him a promise of recompense in the name of the Serdar.'

'A recompense in my name!' exclaimed the Serdar: 'who is this Armenian?—and what Armenian was ever worthy of a recompense?'

Upon this I related the whole of Yûsûf's history, from the beginning to the end. In pleading his cause in this public manner, I

hoped that the Serdar would feel it impossible to resist the justice of the demand which I made upon him, and that my young protegé would at once be released from his fears and apprehensions of the chief's resentment, and restored to the undisputed possession of his wife.

When I had done speaking, nothing was said, but here and there *Allah! Allah! il Allah!* (there is but one God!) in suppressed exclamations from the lips of the Mohamedans present; whilst the Serdar, having rolled his eyes about, and twitched his mouth into various odd shapes, at length mumbled out, 'the Armenian has performed wonders;' and then called aloud to his servants to bring his *Kaliân* or pipe.

Having smoked too or three long whiffs, he said, 'Where is this Armenian? Order the Caliph also to come before us.'

Upon which Yûsûf was ushered in, with the shoves and thrusts by which a poor man of his nation is generally introduced before a Persian grandee; and he stood in face of

the assembly as fine a specimen of manly beauty as was ever seen, evidently creating much sensation upon all present by the intrepidity of his appearance. The Serdar, in particular, fixed his eyes upon him with looks of approbation; and turning round to the executioner in chief, made signs, well known among Persians, of his great admiration.

The Caliph, a heavy, coarse man, of a rosy and jovial appearance, dressed in the black hood peculiar to the Armenian clergy, appeared soon after, followed by two or three of his priests. Having stood for a short time before the Serdar and his companion, he was invited to sit, which he did, not without going through all the ceremonial of complimentary phrases, and covering the feet and hands in a manner usual on such occasions.

The Serdar then, addressing himself to the Caliph, said, ‘It is plain that we Mussulmans are become less than dogs in the land of Irân. The Armenians now break

into our harems, steal our wives and slaves from before our faces, and invite men to defile our fathers' graves. What news is this, O Caliph? Is this Allah's work or yours?'

The Caliph, attacked in this unexpected manner, looked very much alarmed, and the dew broke out upon his ample and porous forehead. Experience had taught him that these sorts of attacks were generally the forerunners of some heavy fine, and he already put himself in a posture of defence to resist it.

'What language is this?' said he in answer. 'We, whose dogs are we, who should dare even to think upon the evil of which your highness speaks? We are the Shah's subjects—You are our protector, and the Armenians sit in peace under your shade. What manner of man is this who has brought these ashes upon our heads?'

'That is he,' answered the Serdar, pointing to Yûsûf. 'Say, fellow, have you stolen my slave or not?'

'If I am guilty,' said the youth, 'of having taken aught from any man, save my own, here am I, ready to answer for myself with my life. She who threw herself out of your windows into my arms was my wife before she was your slave. We are both the Shah's *rayats*, and it is best known to yourself if you can enslave them or no. We are Armenians, 'tis true, but we have the feelings of men. It is well known to all Persia, that our illustrious Shah has never forced the harem of even the meanest of his subjects; and, secure in that feeling, how could I ever suppose, most noble Serdar, that we should not receive the same protection under your government? You were certainly deceived when told that she was a Georgian prisoner; and had you known that she was the wife of one of your peasantry, you never would have made her your property.'

The Caliph, frightened at the language of the youth, stopped him, by loud and angry exclamations; but the Serdar, ap-

parently struck by language so unusual to his ears, instead of appearing angry, on the contrary, looked delighted (if the looks of such a countenance could ever express delight); and, staring with astonished eyes upon the youth, seemed to forget even the reason of his having been brought before him. Of a sudden, as if dispelling his former indignation, he stopped all further discussion by saying to him, 'Enough, enough; go, take your wife, and say no more; and, since you have rendered us a service at Hamamlû, you shall remain my servant, and wait upon my person. Go, my head valet will instruct you in your duties; and when attired in clothes suited to your situation, you will return again to our presence. Go, and recollect that my condescension towards you depends upon your future conduct.' Upon this Yûsûf, in the fulness of his heart, ran up to him with great apparent gratitude, fell upon his knees, and kissed the hem of his garment, not knowing what to say, or what coun-

tenance to keep upon such unlooked-for good fortune.

Every one present seemed astonished: the chief executioner gave a shrug, and indulged in a deep yawn; the Caliph, as if he had been disencumbered of a heavy weight, stretched his limbs, and the huge drops that were before glittering on his brow now disappeared, and his face again expanded into good humour. All congratulated the Serdar upon his humanity and benevolence, and compared him to the celebrated Noushirwan. *Barikallah* and *Mashallah* was repeated and echoed from mouth to mouth, and the story of his magnanimity was spread abroad, and formed the talk of the whole camp. I will not pretend to explain what were the Serdar's real sentiments; but those who well knew the man were agreed, that he could be actuated by no generous motive.

CHAPTER XV.

He describes an expedition against the Russians, and does ample justice to the cowardice of his chief.

My chief and the Serdar having acquired all the information which Yûsûf and I could give them upon the force and position of the Muscovites, it was determined that an attack should immediately be made, and the army was ordered to march upon Hamamlû.

Every thing was soon in motion; the artillery began its tedious and difficult march through the mountains; the infantry made their way in the best manner they could, and the cavalry were seen in unconnected groups all over the plain. I must not omit to say, that before the march began I received a visit from the Armenian. He was no longer, in appearance,

the rude mountaineer with his rough sheep-skin cap, his short Georgian tunick, his sandalled feet, his long knife hung over his knee, and his gun slung obliquely across his body; but he was now attired in a long vest of crimson velvet, trimmed with gold lace and gold buttons; a beautiful Cashmerian shawl was tied gracefully round his waist; his small cap, of Bokhara lamb-skin, was duly indented at the top, and the two long curls behind his ears were combed out with all proper care. He had now more the appearance of a woman than a man, so much were his fine limbs hid by his robes; and as he approached me, he could not help blushing and looking awkward at the metamorphosis. He thanked me with expressions that indicated much gratitude, and assured me, that so far from having expected this result to his interview with the Serdar, he had, in fact, made up his mind to the loss of both his wife and life, and therefore had spoken with the boldness of one determined to die. 'But,' said he, 'notwithstanding

this great change in my fortunes, this new existence of mine will never do. I cannot endure the degradation of being a mere idle appendage to the state of the Serdar; and be not angry if, ere long, I decline the honour of his service. I will submit to every thing as long as my wife is not in a place of safety; but when once I have secured that, then adieu. Better live a swineherd in the Georgian mountains, naked and houseless, than in all these silks and velvets, a despised hanger on, be it even in the most luxurious court of Persia.'

I could not help applauding such sentiments, although I should have been happy had he made any one else his confidant, conscious that if he did run away I should in some measure be made answerable for him.

In the mean while the army proceeded on its march. As we passed Ashtarek, Yûsûf got permission to take possession of Mariam, who, now transformed into the wife of one who had the reputation of

being in the good graces of the Serdar, travelled with great respectability and consideration on horseback, and formed one among the numerous camp-followers that are always attached to a Persian army. The camp was pitched between Gavmishlû and Aberan, where all that was not necessary for the expedition was ordered to remain until its return. It was settled that the Serdar and the chief executioner, each accompanied by their own men, with two pieces of artillery, should form the expedition, and towards the close of the evening it set off.

As we approached the scene of action, the Serdar became impatient of delay, and, like every Persian who despises the utility of infantry, expressed his wish to push on with the cavalry. I will not say as much for the impatience of my chief. He continued his boastings to the last, 'tis true, and endeavoured to make every one believe that he had only to appear, and the enemy would instantly be seized with a

panic; but at length he ceded to the Serdar's wishes of bringing on the rear-guard, whilst the latter pushed on to Hamamlû with the main body of the cavalry. I, of course, remained behind, to act under the orders of my chief. The Serdar intended to reach Hamamlû before break of day in order to surprise the gates, and deviated from the road to ford the Pembaki river. We continued our march straight for that place, and were to appear as the day dawned, to give a retreat to the Serdar, in case he should be beaten back.

The morning had just broke when we reached the banks of the river. The chief executioner was surrounded by a body of about five hundred cavalry, and the infantry was coming up as well as it could. We were about fording the river, when of a sudden we were accosted by a voice on the other side, which shouting out two or three strange words in a language unknown to us, explained their meaning by a musket shot. This stopped our career, and called

the attention of our chief, who came up, looking paler than death.

'What's the news?' exclaimed he, in a voice far below its usual pitch—'what are we doing?—where are we going?—Hajjî Baba,' accosting me, 'was it you that fired?'

'No,' said I, catching rather more of his apprehension than was convenient; 'no, I did not fire. Perhaps there are *ghols* here among the Muscovites, as well as at Ashtarek among the Armenians.'

In another minute more barbarous cries were heard, and another shot was fired, and by this time day had sufficiently advanced to show two men, on the other bank, whom we discovered to be Russian soldiers. As soon as our chief saw the extent of the danger, and the foe opposed to us, his countenance cleared up, and he instantly put on the face of the greatest resolution and vigour. 'Go, seize, strike, kill!' he exclaimed, almost in one breath, to those around him—'Go, bring me the heads of yonder two fellows.'

Immediately several men dashed into

the river, with drawn swords, whilst the two soldiers withdrew to a small rising ground, and, placing themselves in a convenient position, began a regular, though alternate, discharge of their muskets upon their assailants, with a steadiness that surprised us. They killed two men, which caused the remainder to retreat back to our commander, and no one else seemed at all anxious to follow their example. In vain he swore, entreated, pushed, and offered money for their heads: not one of his men would advance. At length, he said, with a most magnanimous shout, 'I myself will go; here, make way! will nobody follow me?' Then, stopping, and addressing himself to me, he said, 'Hajjî! my soul, my friend, won't you go and cut those men's heads off? I'll give you every thing you can ask.' Then, putting his hand round my neck, he said, 'Gó, go; I am sure you can cut their heads off.'

We were parleying in this manner, when a shot from one of the Russians hit the chief

executioner's stirrup, which awoke his fears to such a degree, that he immediately fell to uttering the most violent oaths. Calling away his troops, and retreating himself at a quick pace, he exclaimed, 'Curses be on their beards! Curse their fathers, mothers, their ancestry, and posterity! Whoever fought after this fashion? Killing, killing, as if we were so many hogs. See, see, what animals they are! They will not run away, do all you can to them. They are worse than brutes;—brutes have feeling,—they have none. O Allah, Allah, if there was no dying in the case, how the Persians would fight!'

By this time we had proceeded some distance, and then halted. Our chief, expecting to find the Russians back to back under ever bush, did not know what course to pursue, when the decision was soon made for us by the appearance of the Serdar, who, followed by his cavalry, was seen retreating in all haste from before the enemy. It was evident that his enterprise had entirely

failed, and nothing was left for the whole army but to return whence it came.

I will not attempt to draw a picture of the miserable aspect of the Serdar's troops; they all looked harassed and worn down by fatigue, and seemed so little disposed to rally, that one and all, as if by tacit consent, proceeded straight on their course homewards without once looking back. But as much as they were depressed in spirits, in the same degree were raised those of our commander. He so talked of his prowess, of the wound he had received, and of his intended feats, that at length, seizing a spear, he put his horse at the full gallop, and overtaking his own cook, who was making the best of his way to his pots and pans, darted it at him, in the exuberance of his valour, and actually pierced him in the back through his shawl girdle.

Thus ended an expedition which the Serdar expected would have given him a great harvest of glory and of Muscovites' heads; and which, the chief executioner

flattered himself, would afford him exultation and boasting for the remainder of his life. But, notwithstanding its total failure, still he had ingenuity enough to discover matter for self-congratulation.

Surrounded by a circle of his adherents, amongst whom I was one, he was in the midst of a peal of boasting, when a message came from the Serdar, requesting that Hajjî Baba might be sent to him. I returned with the messenger, and the first words which the Serdar said, upon my appearing before him, were, 'Where is Yûsûf? Where is his wife?'

It immediately occurred to me that they had escaped; and putting on one of my most innocent looks, I denied having the least knowledge of their movements.

The Serdar then began to roll his eye-balls about, and to twist up his mouth into various shapes. Passion burst from him in the grossest and most violent expressions; he vowed vengeance upon him, his race, his village, and upon every thing and every

body in the least connected with him; and whilst he expressed a total disbelief of all my protestations of ignorance, he gave me to understand, that if I was found to have been in the smallest degree an accessary to his escape, he would use all his influence to sweep my vile person from the face of the earth.

I afterwards heard that he had sent a party of men to Gavmishlû, to seize and bring before him Yûsûf's parents and kindred, with every thing that belonged to them; to take possession of their property, and to burn and destroy whatever they could not bring away: but the sagacious and active youth had foreseen this, and had taken his measures with such prudence and promptitude, that he had completely baffled the tyrant. He, his wife, his wife's relations, his own parents and family, with all their effects (leaving only their tilled ground behind them), had concerted one common plan of migration into the Russian territory. It had fully succeeded, as I afterwards

heard, for they were received with great kindness, both by the government and by their own sect; lands were allotted, and every help afforded them for the re-establishment of their losses.

CHAPTER XVI.

He proceeds to the king's camp, and gives a specimen of lying on a grand scale.

I returned to my chief full of apprehension at the threat which I had received; and knowing how very tenacious all our great men are of power over their own servants, I did not fail immediately to inform him of the language which the Serdar had entertained me with. He became furious, and I had only to fan the flame which I had raised in order to create a quarrel between them; but, having more fears about the Serdar's power of hurting me than I had confidence in the ability of the chief executioner to protect me, I thought it best for all parties that I should retire from the scene, and craved my master's permission to return to Tehran. Pleased with an op-

portunity of showing the Serdar that nobody but himself could control his servants, he at once assented to my proposal; and forthwith began to give me instructions concerning what I should say to the grand vizier touching the late expedition, and particularly in what light I was to place his own individual prowess.

'You yourself were there, Hajjî,' said he to me, 'and therefore can describe the whole action as well as I could.—We cannot precisely say that we gained a victory, because, alas! we have no heads to show; but we also were not defeated. The Serdar, ass that he is, instead of waiting for the artillery, and availing himself of the infantry, attacks a walled town with his cavalry only, and is very much surprised that the garrison shut their gates, and fire at him from the ramparts: of course he can achieve nothing, and retires in disgrace. Had I been your leader, things would have gone otherwise; and as it was, I was the only man who came hand to hand with the enemy.

I was wounded in a desperate manner; and had it not been for the river between us, not a man of them would have been left to tell the tale. You will say all this, and as much more as you please;' and then, giving me a packet of letters to the grand vizier, and to the different men in office, and an *arizeh* (a memorial) to the Shah, he ordered me to depart.

I found the Shah still encamped at Sultanieh, although the autumn was now far advanced, and the season for returning to Tehran near at hand. I presented myself at the grand vizier's levee, with several other couriers, from different parts of the empire, and delivered my despatches. When he had inspected mine, he called me to him, and said aloud, 'You are welcome! You also were at Hamamlû? The infidels did not dare to face the *Kizzil bashes*, eh? The Persian horseman, and the Persian sword, after all, nobody can face. Your khan, I see, has been wounded; he is indeed one of the Shah's best servants. Well it was no

worse. You must have had hot work on each bank of the river.'

To all of this, and much more, I said 'Yes, yes,' and 'no, no,' as fast as the necessity of the remark required; and I enjoyed the satisfaction of being looked upon as a man just come out of a battle. The vizier then called to one of his mirzas or secretaries, 'Here,' said he, 'you must make out a *fatteh nameh* (a proclamation of victory), which must immediately be sent into the different provinces, particularly to Khorassan, in order to overawe the rebel khans there; and let the account be suited to the dignity and character of our victorious monarch. We are in want of a victory just at present; but, recollect, a good, substantial, and bloody victory.'

'How many strong were the enemy?' inquired the mirza, looking towards me. '*Bisyar*, *bisyar*, many, many,' answered I, hesitating and embarrassed how many it would be agreeable that I should say. —'Put down fifty thousand,' said the

vizier coolly. 'How many killed?' said the mirza, looking first at the vizier, then at me. 'Write ten to fifteen thousand killed,' answered the minister: 'remember these letters have to travel a great distance. It is beneath the dignity of the Shah to kill less than his thousands and tens of thousands. Would you have him less than *Rustam*, and weaker than *Afrasiab?* No, our kings must be drinkers of blood, and slayers of men, to be held in estimation by their subjects, and surrounding nations. Well, have you written?' said the grand vizier.

'Yes, at your highness's service,' answered the mirza; 'I have written (reading from his paper) that the infidel dogs of Moscovites (whom may Allah in his mercy impale on stakes of living fires!) dared to appear in arms to the number of fifty thousand, flanked and supported by a hundred mouths spouting fire and brimstone; but that as soon as the all-victorious armies of the Shah appeared, ten to fifteen thousand

of them gave up their souls; whilst prisoners poured in in such vast numbers, that the prices of slaves have diminished one hundred per cent in all the slave-markets of Asia.'

'Barikallah! Well done,' said the grand vizier. 'You have written well. If the thing be not exactly so, yet, by the good luck of the Shah, it will, and therefore it amounts to the same thing. Truth is an excellent thing when it suits one's purpose, but very inconvenient when otherwise.'

'Yes,' said the mirza, as he looked up from his knee, upon which he rested his hand to write his letter, and quoting a well known passage in Saadi, 'Falsehood mixed with good intentions, is preferable to truth tending to excite strife.'

The vizier then called for his shoes, rose from his seat, mounted the horse that was waiting for him at the door of his tent, and proceeded to the audience of the Shah, to give an account of the different despatches that he had just received. I fol-

lowed him, and mixed in with his large retinue of servants, until he turned round to me, and said, 'You are dismissed; go, and take your rest.'

CHAPTER XVII.

He relates a horrid tale, the consequences of which plunge him in the greatest misery.

In a few days after the camp was struck, and the Shah returned to his winter quarters at Tehran, in the same pomp and parade with which he had left it. I had resumed my post as sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner, and was busily engaged in disposing of the men under my command, that the best order might be preserved during the march, when I was commanded to send off a messenger to Tehran, with orders that the *bazigers*, the dancers and singers, should be in readiness to receive the Shah on his arrival at Sulimanieh. This place, as I have said before, is a palace situated on the banks of the Caraj, about nine parasangs from the capital.

On receiving this order, my long-forgotten Zeenab came again to my recollection, and all my tender feelings which, owing to my active life, had hitherto lain dormant, were now revived. Seven months were elapsed since we had first become acquainted; and although during that time I had lived with men of a nature sufficiently barbarous to destroy every good feeling, yet there was something so terrible in what I imagined must now be her situation, and I felt myself so much the cause of it, that my heart smote me every time that the subject came across my mind. 'We shall soon see,' thought I, 'if my fears be well founded. In a few days more we reach Sulimanieh, and then her fate will be decided.'

On the day of our arrival I headed the procession, to see that every proper arrangement had been made within the palace; and as I approached the walls of the harem, within which the bazigers had already taken their station, I heard the sounds of their

voices and of their musical instruments. What would I not have given to have spoken to Zeenab, or even to have observed her at a distance! But I knew that it would not be prudent to ask many questions concerning her, as suspicions, dangerous both to her and me, might arise, and probably involve us in immediate ruin. Indeed, had I been inclined to give myself much stir on the subject, it would have been to no purpose; for very shortly after I heard the salute fired from the *Zamburek* camels, which indicated that the Shah had alighted from his horse.

After he had smoked one pipe in his hall of state, and had dismissed the courtiers who attended him, he retired to the harem.

Upon his entrance there, I heard the songs of the women, accompanied by tambourines, guitars, and little drums, rending the air as they walked in procession before him. Well did I listen with all my ears to discover Zeenab's voice; but every endeavour was baffled, and I remained in a

disagreeable state of vibration betwixt hope and fear, until a hasty order was issued for my old master, Mirza Ahmak, the king's physician, to appear immediately before the Shah. Combinations of the mind in all matters of deep interest are formed as quick as thought, and act like the foretellings of prophecy. When I heard that the hakîm was sent for, a cold thrill ran through my veins, and I said to myself, 'Zeenab is lost for ever!'

He came, was soon dismissed, and seeing me at the door of the harem, took me on one side, and said, 'Hajjî, the Shah is much enraged. You remember the Cûrdish slave, which I presented to him at the festival of the No rûz. She has not appeared among the dancing-women, and pretends to be ill. He loves her, and had set his heart upon seeing her. He has called me to account for her conduct, as if I could control the caprice of this daughter of the devil; and says, that if he does not find her in full health and beauty when he

reaches the *ark* (the palace), which will be on the next best fortunate hour, he will pluck my beard out by the roots. Curse the unlucky moment which made her my slave; and still more the hour when I first invited the Shah into my house.'

Upon this he left me, to set off immediately for Tehran, whilst I retired to my tent, to ruminate over the horrid fate that awaited this unfortunate girl. I endeavoured to rally my spirits by the hope that perhaps she was actually ill, and that it had been impossible for her to appear before the king; and then I consoled myself with the idea, that if my fears were well founded, the doctor's heart might be softened, and he might screen her from the Shah's observation, by giving some evasive reason for her non-appearance. Then, after all, as if braving my feelings, I repeated to myself the lines of one of our poets, who, like me, had lost his mistress.

'Is there but one pair of stag eyes, or one cypress waist, or one full-moon face in

the world, that I should so mourn over the loss of my cruel one?

'Why should I burn, why should I cut myself, and sigh out my griefs under the windows of the deaf-eared charmer?

'No, let me love where love is cheap; for I am a miser of my feelings.'

Thus I endeavoured to make light of the subject, and to show myself a true Mussulman by my contempt for womankind. But still, turn where I would, go where I would, the image of Zeenab, a torn and mangled corpse, was ever before my eyes, and haunted my imagination at all seasons and at all hours.

At length the fortunate hour for the Shah's entry was announced, and he entered Tehran amidst the whole of its population, who had been turned out to greet his arrival. My most pressing want was to see the hakîm, as if by chance, in order that no suspicion might fall upon me, in case poor Zeenab was found guilty. On the very evening of our arrival, my wishes (alas!

how fatally!) were accomplished. As I was taken up in giving some orders to a Nasakchi, I saw him come out of the Shah's private apartment, looking full of care, with one hand stuck in his girdle, the other in his side, his back more bent than usual, and with his eyes fixed on the ground. I placed myself in his way, and gave him the salutation of peace, which caused him to look up.

When he had recognized me, he stopped, saying, 'You are the very man I was seeking. Come hither;' and he took me on one side. 'Here is a strange story afloat,' said he; 'this Cûrd has brought all sorts of ashes on my head. *Wallah!* by Heaven, the Shah has run clean mad. He talks of making a general massacre of all that is male, within and without his harem, beginning with his viziers, and finishing by the eunuchs. He swears by his own head, that he will make me the first example if I do not find out the culprit.'

'What culprit? who? what?' said I, 'what has happened?'

'Why, Zeenab,' answered he, 'Zeenab.'

'Oh! I understand,' said I; 'Ay! she you used to love so much.'

'I?' answered the Hakîm, as if afraid of being himself suspected, 'I? *Astaferallah!* Heaven forbid! Do not say so for pity's sake, Hajjî, for if such a suspicion were once hinted, the Shah would put his threat into immediate execution. Where did you ever hear that I loved Zeenab?'

'Many things were reported concerning you at that time,' said I, 'and all were astonished that a man of your wisdom, the Locman of his time, the Galenûs of Persia, should have embarked in so frail and dangerous a commodity as a Cûrdish maid, one of the undoubted progeny of the devil himself, whose footsteps could not be otherwise than notoriously unfortunate; who, of herself, was enough to bring ill luck to a whole empire, much more to a single family like yours.'

'You say true, Hajjî,' said Mirza Ahmak, as he shook his head from side to side,

and struck his left hand on the pit of his stomach. 'Ah! marvellous fool was I ever to have been caught by her black eyes! in fact, they were not eyes, they were spells,—the devil himself looked out of them, not she, and if he is not in her now, may I be called *Gorumsak* all the rest of my days. But, after all, what shall I do?'

'What can I say?' answered I. 'What will the Shah do with her?'

'Let her go to Jehanum,' answered the doctor; 'let her go to her father's mansion, and a good journey to her. I am only thinking of my own skin.'

Upon this, looking up tenderly at me, he said, 'Ah, Hajjî! you know how much I have always loved you: I took you into my house when you were houseless—I placed you in a good situation, and you have risen in your profession all through me—allow that there is, or that there ought to be such a thing in the world as gratitude—you have now an opportunity of exercising it:' then pausing for a while, and playing with the

tip of my beard, he said, 'Have you guessed what I wished to say?'

'No,' said I, 'it has not yet reached my understanding.'

'Well, then,' said he, 'in two words, own that you are the culprit. A great loss of consideration would accrue to me, but none to you; you are young, and can bear such a story to be told of you.'

'Loss of consideration, indeed!' exclaimed I, 'what is that when the loss of life will ensue? Are you mad, oh Hakîm, or do you think me so? Why should I die? why do you wish to have my blood upon your head? All I can say, if I am questioned on the subject, is, that I do not think you guilty, because you were ever too much in fear of the khanum, your wife; but I will never say that I am guilty.'

Whilst in the middle of our conversation, one of the Shah's eunuchs came up to me, and said that his chief had been ordered to see that the sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner, with five men, were in waiting at

the foot of the high tower at the entrance of the harem, at the hour of midnight; and that they were to bring a *taboot*, or hand-bier, with them, to bear away a corpse for interment.

All I could say in answer was '*be cheshm*,' (by my eyes); and lucky was it for me that he quitted me immediately, that Mirza Ahmak had also left me, and that it was dusk, or else the fear and anguish which overwhelmed me upon hearing this message must have betrayed me. A cold sweat broke out all over my body, my eyes swam, my knees knocked under me, and I should perhaps have fallen into a swoon, if the counter fear of being seen in such a state, in the very centre of the palace, had not roused me.

'What,' said I to myself, 'is it not enough that I have been the cause of her death, must I be her executioner too? must I be the grave-digger to my own child? must I be the ill-fated he who is to stretch her cold limbs in the grave, and send my own life's

blood back again to its mother earth? Why am I called upon to do this, oh cruel, most cruel destiny? Cannot I fly from the horrid scene? Cannot I rather run a dagger into my heart? But no, 'tis plain my fate is ordained, sealed, fixed! and in vain I struggle, —I must fulfil the task appointed for me! Oh world, world! what art thou, and how much more wouldst thou be known, if each man was to lift up the veil that hideth his own actions, and show himself as he really is!'

With these feelings, oppressed as if the mountain of Demawend and all its sulphurs were on my heart, I went about my work doggedly, collecting the several men who were to be my colleagues in this bloody tragedy; who, heedless and unconcerned at an event of no unfrequent occurrence, were indifferent whether they were to be the bearers of a murdered corpse, or themselves the instruments of murder.

The night was dark and lowering, and well suited to the horrid scene about to be

acted. The sun, unusual in these climates, had set, surrounded by clouds of the colour of blood; and, as the night advanced, they rolled on in unceasing thunders over the summits of the adjacent range of Albors. At sudden intervals the moon was seen through the dense vapour, which covered her again as suddenly, and restored the night to its darkness and solemnity. I was seated lonely in the guard-room of the palace, when I heard the cries of the sentinels on the watch-towers, announcing midnight, and the voices of the muezzins from the mosques, the wild notes of whose chant floating on the wind, ran through my veins with the chilling creep of death, and announced to me that the hour of murder was at hand! They were the harbingers of death to the helpless woman. I started up, —I could not bear to hear them more,—I rushed on in desperate haste, and as I came to the appointed spot, I found my five companions already arrived, sitting unconcerned on and about the coffin that was to carry my

Zeenab to her eternal mansion. The only word which I had power to say to them was, '*Shoud?*' Is it done? to which they answered, '*Ne shoud,*' It is not done. To which ensued an awful silence. I had hoped that all was over, and that I should have been spared every other horror, excepting that of conducting the melancholy procession to the place of burial; but no, the deed was still to be done, and I could not retreat.

On the confines of the apartments allotted to the women in the Shah's palace stands a high octagonal tower, some thirty gez in height, seen conspicuous from all parts of the city, at the summit of which is a chamber, in which he frequently reposes and takes the air. It is surrounded by unappropriated ground, and the principal gate of the harem is close to its base. On the top of all is a terrace (a spot, ah! never by me to be forgotten!) and it was to this that our whole attention was now riveted. I had scarcely arrived, when, looking up, we saw

three figures, two men and a female, whose forms were lighted up by an occasional gleam of moonshine, that shone in a wild and uncertain manner upon them. They seemed to drag their victim between them with much violence, whilst she was seen in attitudes of supplication, on her knees, with her hands extended, and in all the agony of the deepest desperation. When they were at the brink of the tower her shrieks were audible, but so wild, so varied by the blasts of wind that blew round the building, that they appeared to me like the sounds of laughing madness.

We all kept a dead and breathless silence: even my five ruffians seemed moved—I was transfixed like a lump of lifeless clay, and if I am asked what my sensations were at the time, I should be at a loss to describe them,—I was totally inanimate, and still I knew what was going on. At length, one loud, shrill, and searching scream of the bitterest woe was heard, which was suddenly lost in an interval of the most fright-

ful silence. A heavy fall, which immediately succeeded, told us that all was over. I was then roused, and with my head confused, half crazed and half conscious, I immediately rushed to the spot, where my Zeenab and her burthen lay struggling, a mangled and mutilated corpse. She still breathed, but the convulsions of death were upon her, and her lips moved as if she would speak, although the blood was fast flowing from her mouth. I could not catch a word, although she uttered sounds that seemed like words. I thought she said, 'My child! my child!' but perhaps it was an illusion of my brain. I hung over her in the deepest despair, and having lost all sense of prudence and of self-preservation, I acted so much up to my own feelings, that if the men around me had had the smallest suspicion of my real situation, nothing could have saved me from destruction. I even carried my phrensy so far as to steep my handkerchief in her blood, saying to myself, 'this, at least, shall

never part from me!' I came to myself, however, upon hearing the shrill and dæmon-like voice of one of her murderers from the tower's height, crying out—'Is she dead?' 'Ay, as a stone,' answered one of my ruffians. 'Carry her away, then,' said the voice. 'To hell yourself,' in a suppressed tone, said another ruffian; upon which my men lifted the dead body into the taboot, placed it upon their shoulders, and walked off with it to the burial-ground without the city, where they found a grave ready dug to receive it. I walked mechanically after them, absorbed in most melancholy thoughts, and when we had arrived at the burial-place, I sat myself down on a grave-stone, scarcely conscious of what was going on. I watched the operations of the Nasakchies with a sort of unmeaning stare; saw them place the dead body in the earth; then shovel the mould over it; then place two stones, one at the feet and the other at the head. When they had finished, they came up to me and

said 'that all was done:' to which I answered, 'Go home; I will follow.' They left me seated on the grave, and returned to the town.

The night continued dark, and distant thunders still echoed through the mountains. No other sound was heard, save now and then the infant-like cries of the jackall, that now in packs, and then by two or three at the time, kept prowling round the mansions of the dead.

The longer I remained near the grave, the less I felt inclined to return to my home, and to my horrid employment of executioner. I loathed my existence, and longed to be so secluded from the world, and from all dealings with those of high authority in it, that the only scheme which I could relish was that of becoming a real Dervish, and passing the rest of my days in penitence and privations. Besides, the fear of having disclosed, both by my words and actions, how much I was involved in the fate of the deceased,

came across my mind, and added to my repugnance of returning.

Day by this time began to dawn, and impelled, both by a sense of my danger and by my desire to quit a place which had become odious to me, I determined to proceed on foot to Kinaragird, the first stage to Ispahan, and then take advantage of the first caravan that should be going to that city.

'I will go and seek consolation in retirement, and in the bosom of my family,' said I to myself; 'I will see what is become of my parents—perhaps I may reach the paternal roof in time to receive my father's dying blessing, and by my presence, give him in his old age the happiness of seeing his long-lost son restored to him—How shall I be able to go through my duties, with this misfortune about my neck?—I have lived long enough in vice, and it is time that I should make the *tobeh*, or renounce my wicked ways.'

In short, this horrid event produced such

an effect upon my mind, that had I continued in the sentiments it inspired me with through life, I might well have aspired to be placed at the head of our most holy dervishes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Hajjî Baba meets with an old friend, who cheers him up, gives him good advice, and secures him from danger.

Pulling out the handkerchief from my breast, still wet with the blood of the unfortunate Zeenab, I contemplated it with feelings of the most bitter anguish; then spreading it before me on her grave, I went through a ceremony to which I had long been unaccustomed,—I said my prayers. Refreshed by this act, and strengthened in my resolutions of leaving Tehran, I tore myself away, and stept valiantly onwards towards Ispahan.

Having reached Kinaragird, without seeing the trace of a caravan, and feeling myself sufficiently strong to proceed on my journey, I pushed on for the caravanserai of the Sultan's Reservoir, where I intended to halt for the night.

As I came in sight of the building, at some distance in the desert, I saw a man putting himself into strange attitudes, playing anticks by himself, and apparently addressing himself to something on the ground. I approached him, and found that he was talking with great animation to his cap, which was thrown some yards before him. Going still nearer to him, I discovered a face that was familiar to me.

'Who can it be?' said I to myself: 'it must be one of my old friends, the dervishes of Meshed.'

In fact, it proved to be the *Kesschgou*, the story-teller, who was practising a new story by himself, making his cap act audience. As soon as he saw, he recognised me, and came up to embrace me with seeming rapture.

'Ahi, Hajjî,' said he, 'peace be with you! Where have you been these many years? Your place has long been empty. My eyes are refreshed by the sight of you.' Then he repeated himself in the same strain

several times over, until we at length got upon more rational subjects.

He related his adventures since we had last met; which consisted in the detail of long and painful journeys, and of the various methods which his ingenuity had suggested to him of gaining his bread. He was now on his return from Constantinople, from whence he had walked, and had it in contemplation to make his way in the same manner to Delhi, after having passed a summer at Ispahan, whither he was now proceeding.

Although little inclined to talk, in the melancholy mood in which my mind had been plunged, still I could not refrain in some measure from catching the exuberance of spirits with which my companion seemed to overflow, and I also gave him an account of myself since the day I left Meshed with Dervish Sefer, when I had just recovered from the bastinado on the soles of my feet.

As I proceeded in my narrative, showing

him how, step by step, I had advanced in station and dignity, it was amusing to see with what increased reverence he treated me. At length, when I came to my promotion to the rank of sub-lieutenant to the chief executioner, I verily believe that he would have prostrated himself before me, with such extreme respect had experience taught him to treat gentlemen of that profession. But when he heard the sequel of my story; how for a woman I had abandoned my high situation and all the prospects of advancement which it held out to me; I perceived the low estimation to which I fell in his opinion. He exclaimed that I was not worthy of the *kalaât* (the dress of distinction), which fortune had cut out, fashioned, and invested me with. 'So, because the Shah thinks it fitting to destroy a faithless slave,' said he, 'in whose guilt you have at most only half the share, you think it necessary to abandon the excellent station in life to which you had reached, and to begin again the drudgery of an existence

lower and more uncertain than even the one which I enjoy. Well,' (making a pause,) 'there is no accounting for the different roads which men take in their search after happiness: some keep the high road; some take short cuts; others strike out new paths for themselves; and others again permit themselves to be led on without asking the road: but I never yet heard of one, but yourself, who, having every road and every path thrown open to him, preferred losing his way, with the risk of never again finding it.' And then he finished by quoting a reflection of the poet Ferdûsi, applicable to the uncertainty of a soldier's life, by way of consoling me for the vicissitudes of mine, saying, '*Gahi pûsht ber zeen, gahi zeen ber pûsht*,' (sometimes a saddle bears the weight of his back, and sometimes his back the weight of a saddle).

Whilst we were conversing, a caravan appeared on the road from Ispahan, and making straight for the caravanserai, took up its abode there for the night.

'Come,' said the Dervish, who was a merry sociable fellow, 'come, forget your sorrows for the present; we will pass an agreeable evening, notwithstanding we are in the midst of this dreary and thirsty desert. Let us get together the travellers, the merchants, and the mule-drivers who compose the caravan, and after we have well supped and smoked, I will relate to you a story that has recently happened at Stamboul, and which I am sure cannot yet have been imported into Persia.'

Most willingly did I accede to his proposal; for I was happy to drive melancholy from my thoughts at any rate, and we strolled into the building together.

Here we found men from different parts of Persia, unloading their beasts and putting their effects in order, settling themselves in the different open rooms which look upon the square of the caravanserai. A Dervish, and a story-teller too, was a great acquisition, after the fatigue and dulness of a journey across the Salt Desert; and when

we had made a hearty meal, he collected them on the square platform in the middle of the court, making them sit round, whilst he took his station in the midst. He then related his promised story.

I endeavoured to pay every attention to it; but I found that my mind so constantly strayed from the narrative to the scenes I had lately witnessed, that it became impossible for me to retain what he said. I remarked, however, that he interested his audience in the highest degree; for when plunged in one of my deepest reveries, I was frequently roused by the laughter and applause which the Dervish excited. I promised myself on some future occasion to make him relate it over again, and in the mean while continued to give myself up wholly to my feelings. Much did I envy the apparent light-heartedness that pervaded my companions, and which at intervals made the vaulted rooms of the building resound with shouts of merriment. I longed for the time when I should

again be like them, and enjoy the blessings of existence without care; but grief, like every other passion, must have its course, and, as the spring which gushes with violence from the rock, by degrees dwindles into a rivulet; so it must be let to pass off gradually until it becomes a moderate feeling, and at length is lost in the vortex of the world.

Day had closed by the time that the Dervish had finished his story. The blue vault of heaven was completely furnished with bright twinkling stars, which seemed to have acquired a fresh brilliancy after the storms of the preceding night; and the moon was preparing to add her soft lustre to the scene, when a horseman, fully equipped, entered the porch that leads into the caravanserai.

The principal persons of the caravan had still kept their station on the platform, quietly smoking their pipes and discussing the merits of the tale they had just heard; the servants had dispersed to spread their

masters' beds; and the muleteers had retired for the night to nestle in among their mules and their baggage:—I, destitute of every thing, had made up my mind to pass my night on the bare ground with a stone for my pillow; but when I looked at the horseman, as he emerged from the darkness of the porch into the light, my ideas took another turn.

I recognised in him one of the Nasakchies, who under my orders had witnessed the death of the wretched Zeenab; and I very soon guessed what the object of his journey might be, when I heard him ask, if the caravan was coming from, or going to Tehran; and whether they had seen a person, whom, by the description he gave, I instantly recognised to be myself.

My friend the Dervish immediately divined how the matter stood; and deeply versed in every stratagem of deceit, without hesitation took upon himself to answer for the whole company.

He said, that all were going to the

capital, with the exception of himself and his friend, who, both Dervishes, were just arrived from Constantinople; but that he had met one answering to the person he had described, one who seemed oppressed with care, and worn with grief, wandering about in a sort of chance manner through the wilds of the desert. He added many more particulars which corresponded so entirely to my appearance and history, that the horseman could not doubt for a moment but that this was the person he was in search of, and rode off in great haste according to the directions of the dervish, who, as may be imagined, purposely led him wrong.

When he had been gone some time, the dervish took me on one side, and said, 'If you want to secure yourself from this man, you must instantly depart; for when he finds his search fruitless, and is tired of wandering about the desert, he will certainly return here, and then what can hinder your being discovered?'

'I will do any thing rather than be discovered by him,' said I: 'he is evidently sent to seize me. I can expect no mercy from such a ruffian, particularly as I have not enough money to offer him, for I know his price. Where can I go?'

The dervish reflected a while, and said, 'You must go to Kom: you will reach it before morning, and as soon as you arrive there, lose not a moment in getting within the precincts of the sanctuary of the tomb of Fatimeh. You will then, and not till then, be safe, even from the Shah's power. Should you be caught without its walls, there is no hope for you. You will be seized; and then may Allah take you into his holy keeping!'

'But when I am there,' said I, 'what shall I do? how shall I live?'

'Leave that to me,' said the dervish; 'I shall soon overtake you, and as I know the place and many of the people in it, *inshallah*, please God, you will not fare so ill as you may imagine. I myself was once

obliged to do the same thing, for having been the means of procuring poison for one of the Shah's women, who used it to destroy a rival. Orders were sent to seize me, and I managed to reach the *bust* (the refuge seat) at Shahabdul Azîm just five minutes before the executioner who was to have apprehended me. I never fared better in my life: for I did nothing; I was supported by the charity of those who came to say their prayers at the shrine of the saint: and the women, who constantly travelled thus far to pray and take their pleasure, always contrived to comfort me in my confinement. The only evil you have to fear is an order from the Shah, that no one on pain of death shall give you food: if so, you will be starved into a surrender, and then the Prophet be your protector! But your case is not one of sufficient consequence to make you fear this. The Shah cannot care so much for one slave, when he has a hundred others to fill her place. After all, men do not die so easily as we Persians imagine.

Recollect what the Sheikh says, 'Clouds and wind, the moon, the sun, the firmament, (and he might have added dervishes) all are busied, that thou, O man, mayest obtain thy bread: only eat it not in neglect.''

'I am not the man,' said I, 'who will forget your kindness. Perhaps my fortune may again be on the rise, and then I will put my beard into your hand. You know Hajjî Baba of old, and that he is not one of those who 'exposes his virtues on the palm of his hand, and hides his vices under his armpit.' What I was at Meshed, the same I am now: the seller of adulterated smoke, and the deputy lieutenant to the chief executioner, are one and the same.'

'Well then go,' said the dervish, as he embraced me, 'and God be with you! Take care of the *ghôls* and *gins* as you cross the Salt Desert; and again, I repeat, may Allah, peace, and safety attend you!'

As the day broke I could distinguish the gilt cupola of the tomb, at a considerable

distance before me; and this beacon of my security inspired me with fresh vigour in my solitary march over the dreary waste. I had scarcely reached the outskirts of the town of Kom, before I perceived the horseman at some distance behind, making the best of his way in search of me; and therefore I looked neither right nor left until the massive chain that hangs across the principal gateway of the sanctuary was placed between myself and my pursuer. I then exclaimed, '*Ilhamd'illah!*' Praises to Allah! O Mahomed! O Ali! and kissing the threshold of the tomb, I said my prayers with all the fervency of one who having escaped a tempest has got safe into port.

I had scarcely time to look about me before I perceived the Nasakchi coming towards me. He accosted me with a cold salutation of peace, and then said, 'that he had a royal order to conduct me into the Shah's presence wherever I might be found.'

I told him, that, with all reverence for

his firman, it was my intention to avail myself of the acknowledged privilege of every true believer, to seek refuge at the shrine of the saint, and that, of course, he could not violate it by dragging me from it. 'Besides, this is the favourite saint of the King of Kings,' said I, 'and he respects this shrine more than any other.'

'What shall I do then, Hajjî?' said he. 'You know this is not written in the order. If I go back without you, perhaps the Shah may cut off my ears instead of yours.'

'*Inshallah!* please God,' said I.

'Please God, do you say?' said he in a fury: 'am I come all this way that men should call me ass? I am not a man if I do not make you return with me.' And forthwith we began to wrangle to such a degree, that several of the priests, attached to the endowment, came from their rooms to inquire into the cause of the disturbance.

'Here is one,' exclaimed I, 'who presumes to violate the sanctuary.—I have taken refuge in it, and he talks of forcing

me away! You, that are men of God,' addressing myself to the mollahs, 'speak, and say whether you will allow this?'

They all took my part. 'This is unheard of,' said they, 'in Persia. If you dare to take one from the *bust*, you will not only have the vengeance of the saint on your head, but the whole corps of the Ullemah will be upon you; and be you protected by the King of Kings, or the king of demons, nothing can screen you from their fury.'

The Nasakchi remained quite uncertain what to do, and at length, softening his tone, he endeavoured to make a virtue of necessity, and began to negotiate with me upon what he might get, if he went away without further molesting me.

I did not deny the right he had of being paid for his trouble, for it is precisely what I should have expected myself had I been in his place; but I made him recollect how little I was able to requite him; for he knew as well as I all the circumstances of my

flight, and that I had brought nothing away with me from Tehran.

He suggested that I might give him what effects I had left behind me; to which I did not in the least agree, but recommended him to go whence he came, and to leave the afflicted to their miseries.

The fact is, as I afterwards found out, the rogue had already taken possession of my property, which consisted of clothes, trunks, bedding, horse-furniture, pipes, &c. having himself been the cause of denouncing me to the Shah. He had watched the effect which the murderous death of the unhappy Cûrd had produced upon me, and immediately had laid his plan for my destruction, and for stepping into my situation.

Finding that he could not exert the power which had been vested in him, and that his firman was so much waste paper, as long as I continued to hold fast to my refuge-place, he thought it best to return to Tehran; but in so doing, he delivered

his powers into the hands of the governor of the town, with strict injunctions to keep watch over my actions, and in case I stirred from the sanctuary, to seize and send me a prisoner to the seat of government.

CHAPTER XIX.

He takes refuge in a sanctuary, where his melancholy thoughts are diverted by a curious story.

I HAD scarcely got rid of the Nasakchi, when I heard the voice of my friend the Dervish, who was announcing his arrival in the holy city, by all the different invocations of the Almighty and his attributes, which are frequently made by true believers.

Very soon after, I was delighted to see him coming towards me, and to hear him express his satisfaction that I had reached my resting-place before my pursuer had had time to come up with me.

He proposed to keep me company for a short time, and we took possession of one of the cells situated in the square court forming part of the buildings in the centre of which the tomb is placed. I had by good luck brought away my ready money, con-

sisting of twenty tomauns in gold, besides some silver; and we expended some of this in articles of the first necessity, such as a mat to cover the bare floor of our room, and an earthen jug for our water.

But before we had got any further in our domestic arrangements, the Dervish accosted me in the following manner:

'I must be informed of one thing before we proceed. Do you ever say your prayers? —do you keep your fasts? do you make your ablutions regularly? or, do you continue to live in that fit state for eternal perdition, which we were wont to do at Meshed?'

'Why do you speak thus to me? said I. 'What can it be to you whether I pray or not?'

'It is not much to me,' answered the Dervish, 'but it is a great deal to yourself. This Kom is a place that, excepting on the subject of religion, and settling who are worthy of salvation and who to be damned, no one opens his lips. Every man you meet is either a descendant of the Prophet

or a man of the law. All wear long and mortified faces, and seem to look upon that man as an appointed subject for the eternal fires, who happens to have a rosy cheek and a laughing eye. Therefore, as soon as I approach the place, I always change the atmosphere of my countenance from fair to haze, and from haze to downright clouds and darkness, according as circumstances may require. My knees, which scarcely ever touch the praying carpet, now perform their functions five good times per day; and I, who in any other place never consult any *keblch** but that of my own pleasure and inclinations, now know the direction of the true one, as well as I know the way to my mouth.'

'All this is very well,' said I; 'but what may be the use of it? I am a Musulman, 'tis true, but to such a pitch as this—no never.'

'The use?' answered the Dervish. 'The

* i. e. Mecca, to which all Mohamedans turn in their prayers.

use is this; that it will save you from being starved or stoned to death. These priests will hearken to no medium,—either you are a true believer or you are not. If they were to have the least suspicion that you doubted any of the articles of the faith,—that you did not look upon the Koran as a living miracle, and did not read it with becoming reverence, whether you understand or not,—they would soon show you what power they possess. And if they were to suppose you to be a *sûfi* (a free thinker), by the death of your father and mother, they would tear you into little pieces, and then feel contented that they had got on another post on the high road to paradise. Perhaps, friend Hajjî, you do not know that this is the residence of the celebrated Mirza Abdul Cossim, the first *mushtehed* (divine) of Persia; a man who, if he were to give himself sufficient stir, would make the people believe any doctrine that he might choose to promulgate. Such is his influence, that many believe he could even

subvert the authority of the Shah himself, and make his subjects look upon his firmans as worthless, as so much waste paper. But the truth is, he is a good man; and, except stoning his *sûfi*, and holding us wandering dervishes as the dirt under his feet, I know of no fault in him.'

Having heard him out, I agreed that, however I might deplore the want of habit in my religious duties, yet, situated as I was, it was necessary that I should acquire them, in order to be held in proper estimation by the great authorities, under whose eye I was immediately placed; and forthwith I set about saying my prayers and making my ablutions, as if my very existence depended upon my regularity. Indeed, what I had formerly looked upon as irksome ceremony, now became an agreeable pastime, and helped greatly to soften the tedium of my melancholy life. I never omitted to rise at the first call; to make my ablutions at the cistern,—using all the forms of the strictest shiah,—and then to

pray in the most conspicuous spot I could find. The intonations of my *Allah ho akbar* were to be heard in each corner of the tomb, and I hoped they came to the ear of every inhabitant of it. No face wore a more mortified appearance than mine: even the Dervish, who was the best mimic possible, could not beat me in the downcast eye, the hypocritical ejaculation, the affected taciturnity of the sour, proud, and bigoted man of the law.

It became known that I was a refugee at the sanctuary; and I very soon discovered the advantages which the Dervish had promised me, from taking upon me the airs of the place, and assuming the character of a rigid Musulman. He spread abroad the history of my misfortune,—of course much to my advantage, giving me out for one who was suffering for the sins of another, and asserting that the doctor ought, in fact, to have been the sufferer.

I became acquainted with the principal personages of the town, who were agreed

that they had never known a better model of a true believer than I; and had I not been confined to the walls of the sanctuary, it was in contemplation to have made me a *peish namaz* (a leader of the prayers) at their religious meetings in the mosque. I found that the profound taciturnity which I had adopted was the best help towards the establishment of a high reputation for wisdom; and that, by the help of my beads,—which I kept constantly counting, —a mumble of my lips, and occasional groans and pious exclamations, the road to the highest consideration was open to me.

My Dervish and I lived almost free of expense, so plentifully were we supplied with food. The women, in particular, did not lose an opportunity of bringing me presents of fruit, honey, bread, and other necessaries, for which I repaid them with kind thanks, and now and then with a talisman, written with my own hand.

But although our life was one of ease, yet it was so dull, and so void of incident,

that even the spirits of my companion began to sink under it. In order to fill up some of the long hours of listlessness which oppressed us, I encouraged him to recite all his stories, one by one, not forgetting the one which he had related with so much effect in the caravanserai of the Sultan's Reservoir, and we found this a very agreeable mode of closing the day.

I feel, O reader, that you also may partake of that same dulness which oppressed me; and I think it but fair that I should endeavour to dissipate it, in the same manner as mine was by the Dervish,—therefore I will repeat the story which he related to me; and, whether it amuses you or not, yet perhaps you will be glad to know how the mind of a poor prisoner, in the sanctuary at Kom, was diverted from its miseries.

STORY OF THE BAKED HEAD.

'The present* Khon-khor of Roum is a stanch Musulman, and a rigid upholder of the true faith. Upon his coming to the throne, he announced his intention of doing away with many customs common to the infidels, which had crept into the administration of the state during the reign of his predecessor; and he thought it his duty to endeavour to restore things to their primitive simplicity, and to adopt a mode of government purely Turkish. Accordingly he resumed a custom which had almost got into disuse,—that of going about the city in *tebdil*, or disguise; and he was so careful about the disguises which he adopted, and the people whom he admitted into his secrets on these occasions, that he took all sorts of precautions, and invented all sorts of schemes of secrecy, in whatever related to his dresses, and the characters in which he chose to appear.

* *Khon-khor*,—literally 'Blood drinker;' so the Sultan of *Roum* or Turkey is styled in Persia.

'It is not long ago that considerable discontent prevailed throughout Turkey, and rebellion threatened to break out in Constantinople itself. He was then very anxious to ascertain the temper of the public mind; and, in his usual wary manner, determined to get a suit made that would make him undiscoverable by even his own immediate attendants.

'He usually sent for different tailors at different times, and in different places. On this occasion, he ordered his favourite slave, the white eunuch Mansouri, to bring him one of no repute, with all the requisite secrecy, at midnight, in order that he might receive instructions about a dress.

'The slave in great humility made his *bash ustun* (on my head be it), and went his way to execute the command.

'Close to the gate of the *Bezesten*, or cloth-market, he saw an old man in a stall, so narrow, that he could scarce turn himself about in it, who was taken up in patch-

ing an old cloak. He was almost bent double with constant labour at his shop-board; and his eyes seemed not to have benefited by his application, for a pair of glasses were mounted on his nose. 'This is precisely the man I want,' said the slave to himself: 'I am sure he can be of no repute.' So intent was he upon his work, that he did not heed the salutation of 'Peace be with you, friend!' with which Mansouri accosted him; and when he did look up, and saw the well-dressed personage whom he thought had spoken, he continued his work, without making the usual reply; for he could not suppose that the salutation was meant for such a poor devil as he.

'However, finding that he was the object of the eunuch's attention, he doffed the spectacles, threw away his work, and was about getting on his legs, when he was stopped, and requested not to disturb himself.

"'What is your name?' said Mansouri.

"'Abdallah,' said the tailor, 'at your service; but I am generally called Babadul by my friends, and the world at large.'

"'You are a tailor, are not you?' continued the slave.

"'Yes,' said the other, 'I am a tailor as well as the Muezzin at the little mosque in the fish-market. What more can I do?'

"'Well, Babadul,' said Mansouri, 'have you a mind for a job,—a good job?'

"'Am I a fool,' answered the old man, 'that I should dislike it? Say what it is.'

"'Softly, my friend,' remarked the eunuch; 'we must go on slow and sure. Will you suffer yourself to be led blindfolded at midnight wherever I choose to take you, for a job?'

"'That's another question,' said Babadul; 'times are critical, heads fly in abundance, and a poor tailor's may go as well as a vizier's or a capitan pacha's. But pay me well, and I believe I would make a suit of clothes for Eblis, the foul fiend, himself.'

"'Well, then, you agree to my proposal?" said the eunuch, who at the same time put two pieces of gold in his hand.

"'Yes, most surely,' said Babadul, 'I agree. Tell me what I am to do, and you may depend upon me.'

'Accordingly, they settled between them that the eunuch was to come to the stall at midnight, and lead him away blindfolded.

'Babadul, being left alone, continued his work, wondering what could be the job upon which he was to be so mysteriously employed; and, anxious to make his wife a partaker of the news of his good luck, he shut up his stall earlier than usual, and went to his house, that was situated not far from the little mosque in the fish-market, of which he was the Muezzin.

'Old Dilferîb, his wife, was almost as much bent double as her husband; and in consequence of the two gold pieces, and in contemplation of more which they expected to receive, they treated themselves to a dish of smoking *kabobs*, a salad, dried

grapes, and sweetmeats, after which they consoled themselves with some of the hottest and most bitter coffee which the old woman could make.

'True to his appointment, Babadul was at his stall at midnight, where he was as punctually met by Mansouri. Without any words, the former permitted himself to be blindfolded, whilst the latter led him away by the hand, making many and devious turns, until they reached the imperial seraglio; there, stopping only to open the private iron gate, Mansouri introduced the tailor into the very heart of the Sultan's private apartments. The bandage over his eyes was taken off in a dark chamber, lighted up only by a small lamp, which stood on the shelf surrounding the top of the room, but which was splendidly furnished by sofas of the richest brocade, and by carpets of the most costly manufacture. Here Babadul was commanded to sit, until Mansouri returned with a bundle, wrapped in a large shawl handkerchief: this being

opened, a sort of dervish's dress was displayed to the tailor, and he was requested to look at it, to consider how long he would be making such a one, and then to return it again, duly folded up, to its shawl covering. In the mean while, Mansouri told him to stay there until he should return to take him away again, and then left him.

'Babadul, having turned the dress over and over again, calculated each stitch, and come to his proper conclusions, packed it up in the handkerchief, as he had been commanded; but no sooner had he done this, than a man of lofty demeanour and appearance, whose look made the poor tailor shrink within himself, came into the room, took up the bundle, and walked away with it, without uttering a single word.

'A few minutes after, as Babadul was pondering over the strangeness of his situation, and just recovering from the effects of this apparition, a door opened in another part of the apartment, and a mysterious figure, richly dressed, came in, bearing a

bundle, equally covered with a shawl, about the size of that which had just been taken away; and making the lowest prostrations before the tailor, in great apparent trepidation, approached him, placed it at his feet, kissed the ground, and retreated without saying a word, or even looking up.

"'Well,' said Babadul to himself, 'this may be something very fine, and I may be some very great personage, for aught I know; but this is very certain, that I had rather be patching my old cloak in the stall than doing this job, however grand and lucrative it may be. Who knows what I may have been brought here for? These comings in and goings out of strange looking people, apparently without tongues in their heads, do not argue well. I wish they would give me fewer bows and a greater supply of words, from which I might learn what I am to get by all this. I have heard of poor women having been sewn up in sacks and thrown into the sea.

Who knows? perhaps I am destined to be the tailor on such an occasion.'

'He had scarcely got thus far in his soliloquy, when the slave Mansouri re-entered the room, and told him, without more words, to take up the bundle; which having done, his eyes were again blindfolded, and he was led to the spot from whence he came. Babadul, true to his agreement, asked no questions, but agreed with the slave that in three days the dress should be ready for delivery at his stall, for which he was to receive ten more pieces of gold.

'Having got rid of his companion, he proceeded with all haste to his house, where he knew his wife would be impatiently waiting his return; and as he walked onwards he congratulated himself that at length he had succeeded in getting indeed a job worth the having, and that his fate had finally turned up something good for his old age. It was about two o'clock in morning when he reached the door of his

house. He was received by his wife with expressions of great impatience at his long absence; but when he held up the bundle to her face, as she held up the lamp to his, and when he said, '*Mujdeh*, give me a reward for good news:—see, I have got my work, and a handsome reward we shall get when it is finished,' she was all smiles and good humour.

"'Leave it there till we get up, and let us go to bed now,' said the tailor.

"'No, no,' said the wife, 'I must look at what you have got before I retire, or I shall not be able to sleep:' upon which, whilst he held up the lamp she opened the bundle. Guess, guess at the astonishment of the tailor and his wife, when, instead of seeing a suit of clothes, they discovered, wrapped in a napkin, in its most horrid and ghastly state, a human head!

'It fell from the old woman's hands, and rolled away some paces, whilst the horror-struck couple first hid their faces with their

hands, and then looked at each other with countenances, which nothing can describe.

'‘Work!’ cried the wife, ‘work, indeed! pretty work you have made of it! Was it necessary to go so far, and to take such precautions, to bring this misfortune on our heads? Did you bring home this dead man's head to make a suit of clothes of?'

‘*Anna senna! Baba senna!* Curses be on his mother! Perdition seize his father!’ exclaimed the poor tailor, ‘for bringing me into this dilemma. My heart misgave me as that dog of an eunuch talked of blindfoldings and silence to me: I thought, as true as I am a Turk, that the job could not consist only in making a suit of clothes; and sure enough this dog's son has tacked a head to it. Allah! Allah! what am I to do now? I know not the way to his home, or else I would take it back to him immediately, and throw it in his face. We shall have the Bostangi Bashi and an hundred other Bashis here in a minute, and we shall

be made to pay the price of blood; or, who knows, be hung, or drowned, or impaled! What shall we do, eh, Dilferîb, my soul, say?'

"'Do?' said his wife; 'get rid of the head, to be sure: we have no more right to have it palmed upon us than any body else.'

"'But the day will soon dawn,' said the tailor, 'and then it will be too late. Let us be doing something at once.'

"'A thought has struck me,' said the old woman. 'Our neighbour, the baker, Hassan, heats his oven at this hour, and begins soon after to bake his bread for his morning's customers. He frequently has different sorts of things to bake from the neighbouring houses, which are placed near the oven's mouth over-night: suppose I put this head into one of our earthen pots and send it to be baked; nobody will find it out until it is done, and then we need not send for it, so it will remain on the baker's hands.'

'Babadul admired his wife's sagacity, and forthwith she put her plan into execution. When the head had been placed in a baking-pan, she watched a moment when nobody was at hand, and set it on the ground, in the same row with the other articles that were to be inserted in Hassan's oven. The old couple then double-barred the door of their house, and retired to rest, comforting themselves with the acquisition of the fine shawl and napkin in which the head had been wrapped.

'The baker Hassan and his son Mahmûd were heating their oven, inserting therein thorns, chips, and old rubbish at a great rate, when their attention was arrested by the extraordinary whinings and barking of a dog, that was a constant customer at the oven for stray bits of bread, and much befriended by Hassan and his son, who were noted for being conscientious Musulmans.

' 'Look, Mahmûd,' said the father to the son, 'see what is the matter with the

dog: something extraordinary is in the wind.'

'The son did what his father bade him, and seeing no reason for the dog's noises, said, '*Bir chey yok*, there is nothing,' and drove him away.

'But the howlings not ceasing, Hassan went himself, and found the dog most extremely intent upon smelling and pointing at the tailor's pipkin. He jumped upon Hassan, then at the pot, then upon Hassan again, until the baker no longer doubted that the beast took great interest in its contents. He therefore gently drew off the lid, when need I mention his horror and surprise at seeing a human head staring him in the face?'

''Allah! Allah!' cried the baker; but being a man of strong nerves, instead of letting it fall, as most people would have done, he quietly put on the lid again, and called his son to him.

''Mahmûd,' said he, 'this is a bad world, and there are bad men in it. Some

wicked infidel has sent a man's head to bake; but thanks to our good fortune, and to the dog, our oven has been saved from pollution, and we can go on making our bread with clean hands and clear consciences. But since the devil is at work, let others have a visit from him as well as ourselves. If it be known that we have had a dead man's head to bake, who will ever employ us again? we must starve, we must shut up our oven; we shall get the reputation of mixing up our dough with human grease, and if perchance a hair is found, it will immediately be said that it came from the dead man's beard.'

'Mahmûd, a youth of about twenty, who partook of his father's insensibility and coolness, and who moreover had a great deal of dry humour and ready wit, looked upon the incident in the light of a good joke, and broke out into a hearty laugh when he saw the ugly picture which the grinning head made, set in its earthen frame.

"'Let us pop it into the shop of Kior Ali, the barber, opposite,' said the youth;

'he is just beginning to open it, and as he has but one eye, we shall be better able to do so without being seen. Do, father,' said Mahmûd, 'let me; nobody shall discover me; and let it be done before there is more daylight.'

'The father consented, and Mahmûd catching the moment when the barber had walked to the corner of the street to perform certain ablutions, stept into his shop, and placed the head on a sort of *takcheh*, or bracket on the wall, arranged some shaving towels about it, as if it had been a customer ready seated to be shaved, and, with a boy's mischief in his heart, stept back to his oven again, to watch the effects which this new sort of customer would have upon the blind barber.

'Kior Ali hobbled into his shop, which was but ill lighted by a glimmering of day-light that hardly pierced through the oil-papered windows, and looking about him, saw this figure, as he supposed, seated against the wall ready to be operated upon.

"'Ha! peace be unto you!' said he to it: 'you are rather early this morning; I did not see you at first. My water is not yet hot. Oh, I see you want your head shaved! but why do you take off your *fese* (skull-cap) so soon? you will catch cold.' Then he paused. 'No answer,' said the barber to himself. 'I suppose he is dumb, and deaf too perhaps. Well, I am half blind: so we are nearly upon equal terms: however, if I were even to lose my other eye,' addressing himself to the head, 'I dare say, my old uncle, I could shave you for all that; for my razor would glide as naturally over your head, as a draught of good wine does over my throat.'

'He went methodically about his preparations; he took down his tin basin from a peg, prepared his soap, then stropped his razor on the long bit of leather that was fastened to his girdle. Having made his lather, he walked up to the supposed customer, holding the basin in his left hand, whilst his right was extended to sprinkle

the first preparation of water on the sconce. No sooner had he placed his hand on the cold head, than he withdrew it, as if he had been burnt. 'Eh! why, what's the matter with you, friend?' said the barber: 'you are as cold as a piece of ice.' But when he attempted a second time to lather it, down it came with a terrible bounce from the shelf to the floor, and made the poor shaver jump quite across his shop with the fright.

"'Aman! aman! O mercy, mercy!' cried Kior Ali, as he thrust himself into the furthermost corner without daring to move: 'take my shop, my razors, my towels,—take all I have; but don't touch my life! If you are the *Shaitan*, speak; but excuse my shaving you!'

'But when he found that all was hushed after the catastrophe, and that nothing was to be feared, he approached the head, and taking it up by the lock of hair at the top, he looked at it in amazement. 'A head, by all the Imams!' said he, accosting it: 'and how did you get here? Do you want

to disgrace me, you filthy piece of flesh? but you shall not! Although Kior Ali has lost one eye, yet his other is a sharp one, and knows what it is about. I would give you to the baker Hassan there, if his rogue of a son, who is now looking this way, was not even sharper than this self-same eye; but now I think of it, I will take you where you can do no harm. The Giaour Yanaki, the Greek *Kabobchi** (roast meat man), shall have you, and shall cut you up into mincemeat for his infidel customers.' Upon this, Kior Ali, drawing in one hand, in which he carried the head, through the slit on the sides of his *beniche*, or cloak, and taking up his pipe in the other, he walked down two streets to the shop of the aforesaid Greek.

'He frequented it in preference to that of a Musulman, because he could here

* The *kabob* shops at Constantinople are eating-houses, where, at a moment's notice, a dish of roast meat, and small bits of meat done on skewers, are served up to whoever asks for them.

drink wine with impunity. From long practice he knew precisely where the provision of fresh meat was kept, and as he entered the shop, casting his eye furtively round, he threw the head in a dark corner, behind one of the large sides of a sheep that was to be used for the kabobs of the day. No one saw him perform this feat; for the morning was still sufficiently obscure to screen him. He lighted his pipe at Yanaki's charcoal fire, and as a pretext for his visit, ordered a dish of meat to be sent to him for breakfast; a treat to which he thought himself fully entitled after his morning's adventure.

'Yanaki, meanwhile, having cleaned his platters, put his skewers in order, lit his fires, made his sherbets, and swept out his shop, went to the larder for some meat for the shaver's breakfast. Yanâki was a true Greek: —cunning, cautious, deceitful; cringing to his superiors, tyrannical towards his inferiors; detesting with a mortal hatred his proud masters, the Osmanlies, yet fawning, flattering, and abject whenever any of them,

however low in life, deigned to take notice of him. Turning over his stock, he looked about for some old bits that might serve the present purpose, muttering to himself that any carrion was good enough for a Turk's stomach. He surveyed his half sheep from top to bottom; felt it, and said, 'No, this will keep; but as he turned up its fat tail, the eye of the dead man's head caught his eye, and made him start, and step back some paces. 'As ye love your eyes,' exclaimed he, 'who is there?' Receiving no answer, he looked again, and again; then nearer,—then, thrusting his hand among sheep's heads and trotters, old remnants of meat, and the like, he pulled out the head —the horrid head—which he held extended at arm's length, as if he were afraid that it would do him mischief. 'Anathemas attend your beard!' exclaimed Yanaki, as soon as he discovered, by the tuft of hair on the top, that it had belonged to a Musulman, 'Och! if I had but every one of your heads in this manner, ye cursed race of

Omar! I would make kabobs of them, and every cur in Constantinople should get fat for nothing. May ye all come to this end! May the vultures feed on your carcasses! and may every Greek have the good fortune which has befallen me this day, of having one of your worthless skulls for his football!' Upon which, in his rage, he threw it down and kicked it from him; but, recollecting himself, he said, 'But, after all, what shall I do with it? If it is seen here, I am lost for ever: nobody will believe but what I have killed a Turk.'

'All of a sudden he cried out, in a sort of malicious ecstasy, ''Tis well I remembered,—the Jew! the Jew!—a properer place for such a head was never thought or heard of; and there you shall go, thou vile remnant of a Mahomedan!'

'Upon which he seized it, and hiding it under his coat, ran with it down the street to where the dead body of a Jew lay extended, with its head placed immediately between its legs.

"'In Turkey, you must know,' said the Dervish, 'when a Mohamedan is beheaded, his head is placed under his arm, by way of an honourable distinction from the Christian or Jew, who, when a similar misfortune befalls them, have theirs inserted between their legs, as close to the seat of dishonour as possible.'

'It was in that situation then, that Yanaki placed the Turk's head, putting it as near, cheek by jowl, with the Jew's, as the hurry of the case would allow. He had been able to effect this without being seen, because the day was still but little advanced, and no one stirring; and he returned to his shop, full of exultation at having been able to discharge his feelings of hatred against his oppressors, by placing one of their heads on the spot in nature, which, according to his estimation, was the most teeming with opprobrium.

'The unfortunate sufferer on this occasion had been accused of stealing and putting to death a Mohamedan child (a ceremony in

their religion, which they have been known to practice both in Turkey and Persia), and which created such an extraordinary tumult among the mob of Constantinople, that, in order to appease it, he had been decapitated. His execution had taken place purposely before the door of a wealthy Greek, and the body was ordered to remain there three days before it was permitted to be carried away for interment. The expectation that the Greek would be induced to pay down a handsome sum, in order that this nuisance might be removed from his door, and save him from the ill luck which such an object is generally supposed to bring, made the officer entrusted with the execution prefer this spot to every other. But, careless of the consequences, the Greek shut up the windows of his house, determined to deprive his oppressors of their expected perquisite; and so the dead Jew remained exposed his full time. Few excepting those of the true faith ventured to approach the spot, fearful that the

Mohamedan authorities would, in their wanton propensities to heap insults upon the Giaours, oblige some one of them to carry the carcass to the place of burial; and thus the horrid and disgusting object was left abandoned to itself, and this had given an opportunity to the kabobchi, Yanaki, to dispose of the head in the manner above related, unseen and unmolested. But when, as the day advanced, and as the stir of the streets became more active, this additional head was discovered, the crowd, which gathered about it, became immense. It was immediately rumoured that a miracle had been performed; for a dead Jew was to be seen with two heads. The extraordinary intelligence flew from mouth to mouth, until the whole city was in an uproar, and all were running to see the miracle. The Sanhedrim immediately pronounced that something extraordinary was about to happen to their persecuted race. Rabbins were to be seen running to and fro, and their whole community was now

poured around the dead body, in expectation that he would perhaps arise, put on his heads, and deliver them from the gripe of their oppressors.

'But as ill luck would have it for them, a Janissary, who had mixed in the crowd, and had taken a close survey of the supernumerary head, exclaimed in a mixture of doubt and amazement, 'Allah, Allah, il Allah! these are no infidel's heads. One is the head of our lord and master, the Aga of the Janissaries. Upon which, seeing more of his companions, he called them to him, and making known his discovery, they became violent with rage, and set off to communicate the intelligence to their Orta.

'The news spread like wildfire throughout the whole of the corps of the Janissaries, and a most alarming tumult was immediately excited: for it seems that it was unknown in the capital that their chief, to whom they were devotedly attached, and

one of their own selection, had been put to death.

"'What!' said they, 'is it not enough to deal thus treacherously with us, and deprive us of a chief to whom we are attached; but we must be treated with the greatest contempt that it is possible for men to receive? What! the head of our most noble Aga of the Janissaries to be placed upon the most ignoble part of a Jew! what are we come to? We alone are not insulted; the whole of Islam is insulted, degraded, debased! No: this is unheard-of insolence, a stain never to be wiped off, without the extermination of the whole race!—And what dog has done this deed? How did the head get there? Is it that dog of a Vizier's work, or has the Reis Effendi and those traitors of Frank ambassadors been at work?—*Wallah, Billah, Tallah!* by the holy Caaba, by the beard of Osman, and by the sword of Omar, we will be revenged!'"

We must leave the tumult to rage for a

short time; we must request the reader to imagine a scene, in which Jews are flying in all directions, hiding themselves with great precaution against enraged Turks, who, with expressions like those just mentioned in their mouths, are to be seen walking about in groups, armed to their teeth with pistols and scimitars, and vowing vengeance upon every thing which came in their way. He must imagine a city of narrow streets and low houses, thronged with a numerous population, in dresses the most various in shape and the most lively in colours, all anxious, all talking, all agog as if something extraordinary was to happen; in the midst of whom I will leave him, to take a look into the interior of the Sultan's seraglio, and to inquire in what his eminency himself had been engaged since we last noticed him.

'On the very same night of the tailor's attendance, the Sultan had given a secret order for taking off the head of the Aga of the Janissaries (the fomenter of all the

disturbances which had lately taken place among his corps, and consequently their idol); and so anxious was he about its execution, that he had ordered it to be brought to him the moment it was off. The man entrusted with the execution, upon entering the room where he had been directed to bring the head, seeing some one seated, naturally took him for the Sultan, and, without daring to look up, immediately placed the burthen at his feet, with the prostrations which we have already described as having been performed before the tailor. The Sultan, who not a minute before had taken away the bundle containing the Dervish's dress, had done so in the intention of deceiving his slave Mansouri himself; so anxious was he of being unknown in his new disguise even to him; and intended to have substituted another in its stead; but not calculating either upon the reception of the head, or upon Mansouri's immediate return to the tailor, he was himself completely puzzled how to act

when he found the tailor was gone, led off by his slave. To have sent after them would have disconcerted his schemes, and therefore he felt himself obliged to wait Mansouri's return, before he could get an explanation of what had happened; for he knew that they would not have gone away without the dress, and that dress he had then in his possession. In the mean while, anxious and impatient to know what had become of the expected head, he sent for the officer who was entrusted with the execution; and the astonishment of both may be imagined when an explanation took place.

"'By my beard!' exclaimed the Sultan, having thought awhile within himself; 'by my beard, the tailor must have got the head!'

'His impatience for Mansouri's return then became extreme. In vain he fretted, fumed, and cried 'Allah! Allah!' It did not make the slave return a minute the sooner, who, good man, would have gone quietly to

rest had he not been called upon to appear before the Sultan.

'As soon as he was within hearing, he called out, 'Ahi! Mansouri, run immediately to the tailor—he has got the head of the Aga of the Janissaries instead of the Dervish's dress—run, fetch it without loss of time, or something unfortunate will happen!' He then explained how this untoward event had occurred. Mansouri now, in his turn, felt himself greatly embarrassed; for he only knew the road to the tailor's stall, but was totally unacquainted with his dwelling-house. However, rather than excite his master's anxiety in a higher degree, he set off in quest of the tailor, and went straight to his stall, in the hopes of hearing from the neighbours where his house was. It was too early in the day for the opening of the Bezestan, and except a coffee-house that had just prepared for the reception of customers, where he applied and could gain no intelligence, he found

himself completely at a stand-still. By the greatest good luck, he recollected Babadul had told him that he was the muezzin to the little mosque in the Fish Market, and thither he immediately bent his steps. The azan, or morning invitation to prayers, was now chanting forth from all the minarets, and he expected that he might catch the purloiner of his head in the very act of inviting the faithful to prayers.

'As he approached the spot, he heard an old broken and tremulous voice, which he imagined might be Babadul's, breaking the stillness of the morning by all the energy of its lungs; and he was not mistaken, for as he stood under the minaret, he perceived the old man walking round the gallery which encircles it, with his hand applied to the back of his ear, and with his mouth wide open, pouring out his whole throat in the execution of his office. As soon as the tailor saw Mansouri making signs to him, the profession of faith stuck in his throat; and between the fright of

being brought to account for the head, and the words which he had to pronounce, it is said that he made so strange a jumble, that some of the stricter Musulmans, his neighbours, who were paying attention to the call, professed themselves quite scandalized at his performance. He descended with all haste, and locking the door after him which leads up the winding staircase, he met Mansouri in the street. He did not wait to be questioned respecting the fate of the horrid object, but at once attacked the slave concerning the trick, as he called it, which had been put upon him.

"'Are you a man,' said he, 'to treat a poor Emir like me in the manner you have done, as if my house was a charnel-house? I suppose you will ask me the price of blood next!'

"'Friend,' said Mansouri, 'what are you talking about? do not you see that it has been a mistake?'

"'A mistake, indeed!' cried the tailor, 'a mistake done on purpose to bring a poor

man into trouble. One man laughs at my stupid beard, and makes me believe that I am to make a suit of clothes for him—another takes away the pattern—and a third substitutes a dead man's head for it. Allah! Allah! I have got into the hands of a pretty nest of rogues, a set of ill-begotten knaves!'

'Upon which Mansouri placed his hand upon the tailor's mouth, and said, 'Say no more, say no more; you are getting deeper into the dirt. Do you know whom you are abusing?'

''I know not, nor care not,' answered Babadul; 'all I know is, that whoever gives me a dead man's head for a suit of clothes can only be an infidel dog.'

''Do you call God's vicegerent upon earth, you old demi-stitching, demi-praying fool, an infidel dog?' exclaimed Mansouri in a rage, which entirely made him forget the precaution he had hitherto maintained concerning his employer. 'Are your vile

lips to defile the name of him who is the *Alem penah*, the refuge of the world? What dirt are you eating, what ashes are you heaping on your head? Come, no more words; tell me where the dead man's head is, or I will take yours off in his stead.'

'Upon hearing this, the tailor stood with his mouth wide open, as if the doors of his understanding had just been unlocked.

"'*Aman, aman*, Mercy, mercy, O Aga!' cried Babadul to Mansouri, 'I was ignorant of what I was saying. Who would have thought it? Ass, fool, dolt, that I am, not to have known better. *Bismillah!* in the name of the Prophet, pray come to my house; your steps will be fortunate, and your slave's head will touch the stars.'

"'I am in a hurry, a great hurry,' said Mansouri. 'Where is the head, the head of the Aga of the Janissaries?'

'When the tailor heard whose head it had been, and recollected what he and his

wife had done with it, his knees knocked under him with fear, and he began to exude from every pore.

"'Where is it, indeed?' said he. 'Oh! what has come upon us! Oh! what cursed *kismet*, (fate) is this?'

"'Where is it?' exclaimed the slave, again and again, 'where is it? speak quick!'

'The poor tailor was completely puzzled what to say, and kept floundering from one answer to another until he was quite entangled as in a net.

"'Have you burnt it?'

"'No.'

"'Have you thrown it away?'

"'No.'

"'Then in the name of the Prophet what have you done with it? Have you eat it?'

"'No.'

"'Is it lying in your house?'

"'No.'

"'Is it hiding at any other person's house?'

"'No.'

'Then at last quite out of patience, the slave Mansouri took Babadul by his beard, and shaking his head for him, exclaimed with a roar, 'Then tell me, you old dotard! what is it doing?'

"'It is baking,' answered the tailor, half choked: 'I have said it.'

"'Baking! did you say?' exclaimed the slave, in the greatest amazement; 'what did you bake it for? Are you going to eat it?'

"'True, I said: what would you have more?' answered Babadul, 'it is now baking.' And then he gave a full account of what he and his wife had done in the sad dilemma in which they had been placed.

"'Show me the way to the baker's,' said Mansouri; 'at least, we will get it in its singed state, if we can get it no other. Who ever thought of baking the head of the Aga of the Janissaries? *Allah il allah!*'

'They then proceeded to the baker Hassan's, who was now about taking his bread from his oven. As soon as he be-

came acquainted with their errand, he did not hesitate in telling all the circumstances attending the transmission of the head from the pipkin to the barber's bracket; happy to have had an opportunity of exculpating himself of what might possibly have been brought up against him as a crime.

'The three (Mansouri, the tailor, and the baker) then proceeded to the barber's, and inquired from him what he had done with the head of his earliest customer.

'Kior Ali, after some hesitation, made great assurances that he looked upon this horrid object as a donation from Eblis himself, and consequently that he had thought himself justified in transferring it over to the Giaour Yanaki, who, he made no doubt, had already made his brother-infidels partake of it in the shape of kabobs. Full of wonder and amazement, invoking the prophet at each step, and uncertain as to the result of such unheard-of adventures, they

then added the barber to their party, and proceeded to Yanaki's cook-shop.

'The Greek, confounded at seeing so many of the true believers enter his house, had a sort of feeling that their business was not of roast meat, but that they were in search of meat of a less savoury nature. As soon as the question had been put to him concerning the head, he stoutly denied having seen it, or knowing any thing at all concerning it.

'The barber showed the spot where he had placed it, and swore it upon the Koran.

'Mansouri had undertaken the investigation of the point in question, when they discovered symptoms of the extraordinary agitation that prevailed in the city in consequence of the discovery which had been made of the double-headed Jew, and of the subsequent discovery that had produced such great sensation among the whole corps of Janissaries.

'Mansouri, followed by the tailor, the

baker, and the barber, then proceeded to the spot where the dead Israelite was prostrate; and there, to their astonishment, they each recognized their morning visitor—the head so long sought after.

'Yanaki, the Greek, in the meanwhile, conscious of what was likely to befall him, without loss of time gathered what money he had ready at hand, and fled the city.

'"Where is the Greek?' said Mansouri, turning round to look for him in the supposition that he had joined his party; 'we must all go before the Sultan.'

'"I dare say he is run off,' said the barber. 'I am not so blind but I can see that he it is who gifted the Jew with his additional head.'

'Mansouri now would have carried off the head; but surrounded as it was by a band of enraged and armed soldiers, who vowed vengeance upon him who had deprived them of their chief, he thought it most prudent to withdraw. Leading with

him his three witnesses, he at once proceeded to the presence of his master.

'When Mansouri had informed the Sultan of all that had happened, where he had found the head of the Aga of the Janissaries, how it had got there, and of the tumult it had raised, the reader may better imagine than I can describe the state of the monarch's mind. To tell the story with all its particulars he felt would be derogatory to his dignity, for it was sure to cover him with ridicule; but at the same time to let the matter rest as it now stood was impossible, because the tumult would increase until there would be no means of quelling it, and the affair might terminate by depriving him of his crown together with his life.

'He remained in a state of indecision for some time, twisting up the ends of his mustachios, and muttering Allah! Allah! in low ejaculations, until at length he ordered the Prime Vizier and the Mûfti to his presence.

'Alarmed by the abruptness of the summons, these two great dignitaries arrived at the imperial gate in no enviable state o. mind; but when the Sultan had informed them of the tumult then raging in the capital, they resumed their usual tranquillity.

'After some deliberation it was resolved, that the tailor, the baker, the barber, and the kabobchi, should appear before the tribunal of the Mûfti, accused of having entered into a conspiracy against the Aga of the Janissaries, and stealing his head, for the purposes of baking, shaving, and roasting it, and that they should be condemned to pay the price of his blood; but as the kabobchi had been the immediate cause of the tumult by treating the head with such gross and unheard-of insult, and and as he was a Greek and an infidel, it was further resolved that the Mûfti should issue a *fetwah*, authorizing his head to be cut off, and placed on the same odious spot

where he had exposed that of the Aga of the Janissaries.

'It was then agreed between the Sultan and his grand vizier, that in order to appease the Janissaries a new Aga should be appointed who was agreeable to them, and that the deceased should be buried with becoming distinction. All this (except killing the Greek, who had fled) was done, and tranquillity again restored to the city. But it must further be added to the honour of the Sultan, that he not only paid every expense which the tailor, the baker, and the barber were condemned to incur, but also gave them each a handsome reward for the difficulties into which they had so unfortunately been thrown.'

I have much curtailed the story, particularly where Mansouri proceeds to relate to the Sultan the fate of the head, because, had I given it with all the details the Dervish did, it would have been over long. Indeed I have confined myself as much as

possible to the outline; for to have swelled the narrative with the innumerable digressions of my companion a whole volume would not have contained it. The art of a story-teller (and it is that which marks a man of genius) is to make his tale interminable, and still to interest his audience. So the Dervish assured me; and added, that with the materials of the one which I have now attempted to repeat, he would bind himself to keep talking for a whole moon, and still have something to say.

CHAPTER XX.

He becomes a saint, and associates with the most celebrated divine in Persia.

At length Mirza Abdul Cossim himself, having heard much of my sanctity, took an opportunity, when visiting the shrine of the saint, to send for me. This was an event which I contemplated with apprehension; for how could I possibly conceal my ignorance from one who would certainly put my pretensions of knowledge to the test?—an ignorance so profound, that I could scarcely give an account of what were the first principles of the Mohamedan faith.

I therefore began to take myself to task upon what I did know. Let me see, said I, I know, 1st, That all those who do not believe in Mahomed, and in Ali his lieutenant, are infidels and heretics, and are worthy of death.

2nd, I also know that all men will go to *Jehanum* (hell), excepting the true believers; and I further believe that it is right to curse Omar.—I am certain that all the Turks will go to Jehanum,—that all Christians and Jews are *nejis* (unclean), and will go to Jehanum,—that it is not lawful to drink wine or eat pork,—that it is necessary to say prayers five times a day, and to make the ablution before each prayer, causing the water to run from the elbow to the fingers, not contrariwise, like the heretical Turks.

I was proceeding to sum up the stock of my religious knowledge, when the Dervish came into the room; and I made no scruple of relating to him my distress and its cause.

'Have you lived so long in the world,' said he, 'and not yet discovered that nothing is to be accomplished without impudence? The stories which Dervish Sefer, his companion, and I related to you at

Meshed, have they made so little impression upon you?'

'The effect of those stories upon my mind,' said I, 'produced such a bastinado upon the soles of my feet, by way of a moral, that I request you to be well assured I shall neither forget you nor them as long as I live: the *félek* is a great help to the memory. And now, according to your own account, instead of the bastinado, I am likely to get stoned, should I be found wanting; a ceremony which, if it be the same to you, I had rather dispense with. Say then, O Dervish, what shall I do?'

'You are not that Hajjî Baba which I always took you to be,' said the Dervish, 'if you have not the ingenuity to deceive the mûshtehed. Keep to your silence, and your sighs, and your shrugs, and your downcast looks, and who is there that will discover you to be an ass? No, even I could not.'

'Well,' said I, 'be it so: *Allah kerim!*

God is great!—but it is being in very ill luck to be invited to an entertainment to eat one's own filth.'

Upon which I set forward with my most mortified and downcast looks to visit the mûshtehed, and, thanks to my misfortunes, I truly believe that no man in the whole city could boast of so doleful a cast of countenance as I could. However, as I slowly paced the ground, I recollected one of the tales recited by our great moralist Saadi, in his chapter upon the Morals of Dervishes, which applied so perfectly to my own case, that I own it cheered me greatly, and gave me a degree of courage to encounter the scrutiny of the mûshtehed which otherwise I never could have acquired. It is as follows:

'A devout personage was once asked, what he thought of the character of a certain holy man, of whom others had spoken with slight and disrespect? He answered, 'In his exterior I can perceive no fault, and of what is concealed within him I am

ignorant. He who weareth an exterior of religion, doubt not his goodness and piety, if you are ignorant of the recesses of his heart. What hath the *mohtesib* to do with the inside of the house?'"

I then recollected some sentences from the same chapter, which would apply admirably in case I were called upon to show my learning and humility at the same time; for I promised to say to the holy man, should he offer me an opportunity, 'Do unto me that which is worthy of thee, treat me not according to my desert. Whether you slay or whether you pardon, my head and face are on thy threshold. It is not for a servant to direct; whatsoever thou commandest I shall perform.'

The mûshtehed had just finished his mid-day prayer, and was completing the last act of it by turning his head first over the right shoulder then over the left, when I entered the open apartment where he was seated. It was lined with his disciples, on each side and at the top, all of whom

looked upon him with the reverence and respect due to a master. Here he held his lectures. A mollah, with whom I was acquainted, mentioned who I was, and forthwith I was invited to take my place on the carpet, which I did, after having with great humility kissed the hem of the holy man's cloak. 'You are welcome,' said he; 'we have heard a great deal concerning you, Hajjî, and *inshallah*, your steps will be fortunate. Sit up higher!'

I made all sorts of remonstrances against sitting higher up in the room (for I had taken the lowest place); and when I had crept up to the spot to which he had pointed with his finger, I carefully nestled my feet closely under me, covering both them and my hands with my coat.

'We have heard,' said he, 'that you are a chosen slave of the Most High; one whose words and whose acts are the same; not wearing a beard of two colours, like those who are Musulmans in outward

appearance, but who are Kafirs in their hearts.'

'May your propitious condescension never be less!' said I.: 'your servant is the most abject of the least of those who rub their forehead on the threshold of the gate of Almighty splendour.'

Here ensued a pause and dead silence, when we each appeared absorbed in deep meditation. The mûshtehed then breaking the silence, said to me:

'Is it true, O Hajjî! that your *talleh*, your destiny, has turned its face upon you, and that you have come hither to seek refuge? We and the world have long bid adieu to each other; so my questions are not to satisfy curiosity, but to inform me whether I can be of use to you. Our holy Prophet (upon whom be blessings and peace)! sayeth, 'Let our faithful followers help each other: those who see, let them lead the blind; those who prosper, let them help those who are in adversity.''

Upon this I took courage, spoke my sentences from Saadi, as already recited, and told my tale in such a modified manner, that my auditors, I verily believe, began to look upon me as very little short of a martyr.

'If it is so,' said the mûshtehed, 'perhaps the day is not far off, when I may be the instrument, in the hands of God, to see justice done you. The Shah is to visit the tomb before this month is expired, and as he looks upon me with the eyes of approbation, be assured that I will not be deficient in endeavouring to procure your release.'

'What can such a sinner as I say to one of your high sanctity? I will pray for you; the dust of your path shall be collyrium for my eyes. Whatever you will do for me will be the effect of your goodness.'

'It is plain that you are one of us,' said the mûshtehed, apparently well satisfied at the almost divine honours which I paid him. 'True Musulmans always recognise each other in the same manner, as I have

heard to be the case among a sect of the Franks, called *Faramooshi**, who by a word, a look, or a touch, will discover one another even among thousands.'

'*Allah ho akbar!* God is great;' and '*La Allah il Allah!* there is but one God!' was echoed by the company, in admiration of the mûshtehed's knowledge; and then he continued to address me thus:

'There is an Ajem with you, who calls himself a Dervish. Is he an acquaintance of yours? He says that he and you are *hem dum*, of one breath. Is it so?'

'*Che arz bekunum?* what supplication can I make?' said I, not knowing precisely whether to acknowledge my friend or not.

'Yes, he is a *fakîr*, a poor man, to whom I have given a path near me. He has done me some little service, and I am mindful of him.'

'You must be mindful of yourself,' said

* So the Persians call Freemasons, about whom they are very inquisitive.

an old mollah, who sat next to me. 'Whatever is thief, whatever is knave, you will be sure to find it among these Ajems.'

'Yes,' said the mûshtehed, as he rested both his hands upon his girdle, whilst his disciples (who knew this to be his favourite attitude when about to make a speech) settled their faces into looks of attention—'yes, these, and all who call themselves Dervishes, be they the followers of *Nûr Ali Shahi*, be they *Zahabîes*, be they *Nakshbendies*, or be they of that accursed race of *Uweisîes*; all are kafirs, or heretics —all are worthy of death. The one promulgate, that the fastings of the Ramazan, our ablutions, the forms and number of our daily prayers, are all unnecessary to salvation; and that the heart is the test of piety, and not the ceremonies of the body. The other acknowledged the Koran, 'tis true; but they reject every thing else: the sayings of the Prophet, opinions of saints, &c. are odious to them; and they show their

religious zeal by shouting out the blessed name of Allah, until they foam at the mouth, like so many roaring lions; and this they are pleased to call religion. Another set pretend to superior piety, by disfiguring the outward man, making vows, and performing acts of penance, that partake more of the tricks of mountebanks than of the servants of the Almighty. The fourth, the most heretical of all, would make us believe that they live in eternal communion with supernatural powers; and whilst they put on a patched and threadbare garment, affect to despise the goods of this world, and keep themselves warm by metaphysical meditations, which neither they nor any one else understand. No distinction of clean or unclean (may they enjoy the eternal grills!) stands in their way; lawful and unlawful is all one to them; they eat and drink whatever they choose, and even the Giaours, the infidels, are undefiled in their sight. And these call

themselves Sûfies; these are your wise men; these are your lights of the world! Curses on their beard!' To which all the company answered '*ameen*,' or amen. 'Curses on their fathers and mothers! Curses on their children! Curses on their relations! Curses on Sheikh Attar*! Curses on Jelâledîn Rûmi!' After each curse the whole assembly echoed 'Ameen!

When he had concluded, all the company, whilst they expressed their admiration at his doctrine, looked at me to see if I was not struck with amazement. I was not backward in making the necessary exclamations, and acted my part so true to the life, that the impression in my favour was universal.

The mûshtehed, warmed by his own words, continued to harangue against the Sûfies with such vehemence, that I believe had there been one at hand, they would have risen in a body and put him to death.

* *Sheikh Attar* and *Jelâledîn Rûmi* are the two great doctors of the Sufies.

I hugged myself in the success which had accompanied my attempt to appear a good Musulman, and now began to think that I was one in right earnest.

'If what I do,' said I, 'constitutes a religious man, and is to acquire me the world's consideration, nothing is more easy. Why then should I toil through life, a slave to some tyrant, exposed to every vicissitude, uncertain of my existence beyond the present moment, and a prey to a thousand and one evils?'

I left the mûshtehed, and returned to my cell, determined to persevere in my pious dispositions. When I met my companion again, I told him all that had happened, and every thing that had been said about him and dervishes in general; and advised him, considering the temper in which I had left the assembly, to make the best of his way out of a place in which every man's mind and hand were turned against him. 'If they catch you, they stone you, friend!' said I; 'upon that make your mind easy.'

'May the stones alight on their own heads!' exclaimed the dervish: 'a set of blood-thirsty heathens! What sort of religion can theirs be which makes them seek the life of an inoffensive man? I come here, having no one thing to do with either Sûni or Shiah, Sûfi or Mohamedan: on the contrary, out of compliment to them, I go through all the mummery of five washings and five prayings per day, and still that will not satisfy them; however, I will be even with them. I will go; I will leave their vile hypocritical town; and neither will I wash nor pray until necessity obliges me to pass through it again.'

I must own that I was not sorry when I heard the dervish make this resolution. I saw him with pleasure gird on his broad leathern belt, from which was suspended great bunches of beads, and stick his long spoon in it. I helped to fasten his deer-skin to his back; and when he had taken up the iron weapon, which he carried on his shoulder, in one hand, whilst his other bore

his calabash suspended with three chains, we bade each other adieu with great apparent cordiality.

Leaving me to the full possession of my cell, he sallied forth with all the lightness and gaiety of heart of one who had the world at his command, instead of the world before him, with nothing but his two feet and his ingenuity to carry him through it.

'May the mercy of Allah be poured over you,' said I, as I saw the last of him, 'you merry rogue! and mayest thou never want a pair of shoes to your feet, nor a pleasant story to your tongue, with both of which thou mayest go through life with more pleasure both to thyself and others than the rich man, who is the slave of a thousand wants, a dependent upon his dependents for the commonest necessaries of his existence.'

CHAPTER XXI.

Hajjî Baba is robbed by his friend, and left utterly destitute; but is released from his confinement.

My mind now dwelt upon the promise which the mûshtehed had made of procuring my pardon and release from the Shah, when he came to visit the sanctuary at Kom; and it occurred to me, that to secure the favour of so powerful an advocate, I ought to make him a present, without which nothing is ever accomplished in Persia. But of what it was to be composed was the next consideration. The money left in my purse was all that I had to subsist upon until I should acquire a new livelihood; and, little as it was, I had kept it safely buried in an unfrequented corner near my cell.

I fixed upon a praying-carpet, as the best present for one who is always upon

his knees, and had laid my plan for getting some brought to me from the bazar to look at.

'Every time the good man prays,' said I, 'he will think of me; and as one is apt to make good resolutions in such moments, perhaps he will be put in mind of his promises to endeavour to release me.'

I forthwith resorted to my secret corner for my purse, in the determination of sacrificing one of my remaining tomauns to this purpose. But here let me stop, and let me request the reader to recollect himself, and reflect upon his feelings after the most severe disappointment which it may have been his lot to sustain, and let me tell him, that it was nothing to my grief, to my rage, to my exasperation, when I found that my purse was gone.

My soul came into my mouth; and without a moment's hesitation I exclaimed, 'O thou bankrupt dog! thou unsainted dervish! You have brought me safe into harbour, 'tis true; but you have left me

without an anchor. May your life be a bitter one, and may your daily bread be the bread of grief! And so, after all, Hajjî Baba has become a beggar!'

I then took to making the most sorrowful moanings and lamentations; for the fear of starvation now stared me in the face, notwithstanding the charity of the people of Kom; and as despair is a malady which increases the more the mind dwells upon its misfortune, I seemed to take delight in reverting to all the horrors which I had lately witnessed in the death of Zeenab; then I dwelt upon my confinement, then upon my loss, and at length wound myself up to look upon my situation as so desperate, that if I had had poison by me, I should certainly have swallowed it.

At this moment passed by my cell the old mollah, who, during my visit to the mûshtehed, had warned me against putting too much confidence in the dervish. I told him of my misfortune, and raised

such doleful wailings, that his heart was touched.

'You spoke but too well, O mollah!' said I, 'when you warned me against the dervish. My money is gone, and I am left behind. I am a stranger; and he who called himself my friend has proved my bitterest enemy! Curses on such a friend! Oh! whither shall I turn for assistance?'

'Do not grieve, my son,' said the mollah; 'we know that there is a God, and if it be his will to try you with misfortune, why do you repine? Your money is gone,—gone it is, and gone let it be; but your skin is left,—and what do you want more? A skin is no bad thing, after all!'

'What words are these?' said I: 'I know that a skin is no bad thing; but will it get back my money from the dervish?'

I then requested the old man to state my misfortune to the mûshtehed, and, moreover, my impossibility of showing him that respect by a present, which was due to

him, and which it had been my intention to make.

He left me with promises of setting my case in its proper light before the holy man; and, to my great joy, on the very same day the news of the approaching arrival of the Shah was brought to Kom by the chief of the tent-pitchers, who came to make the necessary preparations for his accommodation.

The large open saloon in the sanctuary in which the king prays was spread with fine carpets, the court was swept and watered, the fountain in the centre of the reservoir was made to play, and the avenues to the tomb were put into order. A deputation, consisting of all the priests, was collected, to go before him, and meet him on his entry; and nothing of ceremony was omitted which was due to the honour and dignity of the Shadow of the Almighty upon earth.

I now became exceedingly anxious about my future fate; for it was long since I had heard from Tehran, and I was ignorant of

the measure of the Shah's resentment against me. Looking upon the dark side of things my imagination led me to think that nothing short of my head would satisfy him; but then, cheering myself with a more pleasing prospect, I endeavoured to believe that I was too insignificant a personage that my death should be of any consequence, and built all my hopes upon the intercession of the mûshtehed.

The chief tent-pitcher had formerly been my friend, and among his assistants I recognised many of my acquaintance. I soon made myself known to them; and they did not, for a wonder, draw back from recognising me, although one of our greatest sages hath said, 'that a man in adversity is shunned like a piece of base money, which nobody will take; and which, if perchance has been received, is passed off to another as soon as possible.'

The new comers gave me all the intelligence of what had happened at court since I had left it; and although I professed to

have renounced the world, and to have become a recluse, a sitter in a corner, as it is called, yet still I found that I had an ear for what was passing in it. They informed me that the chief executioner had returned from his campaign against the Russians, and had brought the Shah a present of two Georgian slaves, a male and a female, besides other rarities, in order the better to persuade him of his great feats and generalship. The present had been accepted, and his face was to be whitened by a dress of honour, provided he made the *tobeh*, oath of penance, restraining himself from the use of wine for the future. I also learnt, notwithstanding it was known how deeply I was implicated in Zeenab's guilt, that my former master, the hakîm, had still been obliged to make a large present to the Shah, besides having had half his beard pulled out by the roots, for the loss which his majesty had incurred by her death, and for his disappointment at not finding her ready to dance and sing before him on his return from Sultanieh.

The king's wrath for the loss of the Cûrdish slave had in great measure subsided, owing to the chief executioner's gift of the Georgian one, who was described as being the finest person of the sort who had been exhibited at the slave-market since the days of the celebrated *Taous*, or Peacock; and was, in short, the pearl of the shell of beauty, the marrow of the spine of perfection. She had a face like the full moon, eyes of the circumference of the chief tent-pitcher's forefinger and thumb, a waist that he could span, and a form tall and majestic as the full-grown cypress. And they moreover assured me, that the Shah's anger against me would very easily cede to a present of a few tomauns.

Here again my anathemas against the dervish broke forth; 'and but for him,' said I, 'I might have appeared not empty-handed.' However I was delighted to hear that my case was not so desperate as I had imagined; and, seated on the carpet of hope, smoking the pipe of expectation, I

determined to await my fate with that comfortable feeling of predestination which has been so wisely dispensed by the holy Prophet for the peace and quiet of all true believers.

The King of Kings arrived the next day, and alighted at his tents, which were pitched without the town. I will not waste the reader's time in describing all the ceremonies of his reception, which, by his desire, were curtailed as much as possible, inasmuch as his object in visiting the tomb of Fatimeh was not to reap worldly distinctions, but to humble himself before God and men, in the hope of obtaining better and higher reward.

His policy has always been to keep in good odour with the priesthood of his country; for he knew that their influence, which is considerable over the minds of the people, was the only bar between him and unlimited power. He therefore courted Mirza Abdul Cossim, the mûshtehed of

Kom, by paying him a visit on foot, and by permitting him to be seated before him, an honour seldom conferred on one of the laity. He also went about the town on foot, during the whole time of his stay there, giving largely to the poor, and particularly consecrating rich and valuable gifts at the shrine of the saint. The king himself, and all those who composed his train, thought it proper to suit their looks to the fashion of the place; and I was delighted to find that I was not singular in my wo-smitten face and my mortified gait. I recollected to have heard, when I was about the court, that the Shah, in point of fact, was a Sûfi at heart, although very rigid in the outward practices of religion; and it was refreshing to me to perceive, among the great officers in his train, one of the secretaries of state, a notorious sinner of that persuasion, who was now obliged to fold up his principles in the napkin of oblivion, and clothe himself in the garments of the true faith.

On the morning of the Shah's visit to the tomb for the purpose of saying his prayers, I was on the alert, in the hopes of being remarked by the mûshtehed, who would thus be reminded of his promises to me.

About an hour before the prayer of mid-day, the Shah, on foot, escorted by an immense concourse of attendants, priests, and of the people, entered the precincts of the sanctuary. He was dressed in a dark suit, the sombre colours of which were adapted to the solemn looks of his face, and he held in his hand a long enamelled stick, curiously inlaid at the pommel. He had put by all ornament, wearing none of his customary jewellery, not even his dagger, which on other occasions he is never without. The only article of great value was his rosary, composed of large pearls (the produce of his fishery at Bahrein), of the most beautiful water and symmetry, and this he kept constantly in his hand.

The mûshtehed walked two or three

steps behind him on the left hand, respectfully answered the interrogatories which the king was pleased to make, and lent a profound attention to all his observations.

When the procession came near me (for it passed close to my cell), I seized an opportunity, when no officer was at hand, to run forward, throw myself on my knees, make the prostration with my face to the ground, and exclaim, 'Refuge in the King of Kings, the asylum of the world! In the name of the blessed Fatimeh, mercy!'

'Who is this?' exclaimed the king to the mûshtehed. 'Is he one of yours?'

'He has taken the *bust* (the sanctuary),' answered the mirza, 'and he claims the accustomed pardon of the Shadow of the Almighty to all unfortunate refugees whenever he visits the tomb. He and we all are your sacrifice; and whatever the Shah ordains, so let it be.'

'But who and what are you?' said the

Shah to me; 'why have you taken refuge here?'

'May I be your sacrifice!' said I. 'Your slave was the sub-deputy executioner to the Centre of the Universe, Hajjî Baba by name; and my enemies have made me appear criminal in the eyes of the Shah, whilst I am innocent.'

'*Yaftéh îm*, we have understood,' rejoined the king, after a minute's pause. 'So you are that Hajjî Baba? *Mûbarek*, much good may it do you. Whether it was one dog or another that did the deed, whether the hakîm or the sub-deputy, it comes to the same thing,—the end of it has been that the king's goods have burnt. That is plain enough, is it not, Mirza Abdul Cossim?' said he, addressing himself to the mûshtehed.

'Yes, by the sacred head of the king,' answered the holy man; 'generally in all such cases between man and woman, they, and they alone, can speak to the truth.'

'But what does our holy religion say in

such cases?' observed the king: 'the Shah has lost a slave—there is a price of blood for the meanest of human beings—even a Frank or a Muscovite have their price, and why should we expend our goods gratis, for the amusement of either our chief physician or our sub-deputy executioner?'

'There is a price upon each of God's creatures, and blood must not be spilt without its fine; but there is also an injunction of forgiveness and lenity towards one's fellow creatures,' said the mûshtehed, 'which our holy Prophet (upon whom be eternal blessings!) has more particularly addressed to those invested with authority, and which, O king, cannot be better applied than in this instance. Let the Shah forgive this unfortunate sinner, and he will reap greater reward in Heaven than if he had killed twenty Muscovites, or impaled the father of all Europeans, or even if he had stoned a Sûfi.'

'Be it so,' said the Shah; and turning to me, he said with a loud voice, '*Mura-*

khas, you are dismissed; and recollect it is owing to the intercession of this man of God,' putting his hand at the same time upon the shoulder of the mûshtehed, 'that you are free, and that you are permitted to enjoy the light of the sun. *Bero!* Go! open your eyes, and never again stand before our presence.'

END OF VOL. II.